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THE PRIDE OF SCOTLAND

#173

Classic Racer

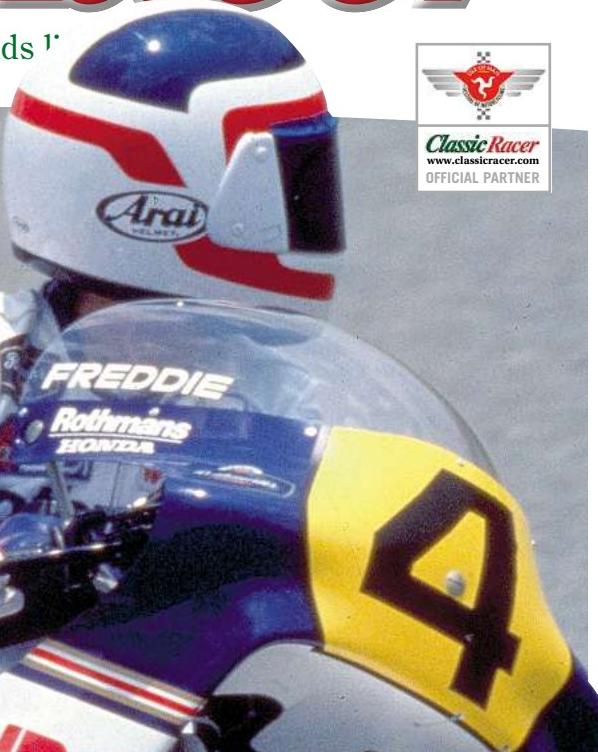
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CLASSIC RACER MACHINES

HONDA NSR500 RACER TEST

First and foremost

Words: Alan Cudworth

Photography: Noboru Takeuchi and Clive Challinor

I guess I have Wayne Gardner to thank for beginning a 30 year career of track testing Honda's latest and greatest Grand Prix hardware, writes Alan Cudworth.

40 ClassicRacer

ClassicRacer 41

48 Alan Cathcart tests Freddie Spencer's double top 500 and shares the experience.

58 With his photographic memory Freddie Spencer relives the road to making racing history.

A large, high-resolution portrait of Bernie Ecclestone, the former Formula 1 supremo. He is shown from the chest up, looking slightly to his right with a thoughtful expression. He has long, thin white hair and is wearing dark-rimmed glasses. He is dressed in a dark blue zip-up jacket over a light-colored collared shirt. To the left of Ecclestone, there is a graphic element. It features the word 'BERNIE' in large, bold, white capital letters, and 'ECCLESTONE' in slightly smaller white capital letters below it. Underneath this, the words 'One winning Formula' are written in a flowing, cursive-style font. At the very bottom left of the page, there is some very small, faint text that appears to be a copyright notice or source information.

66 Formula 1 supremo Bernie Ecclestone reflects on simpler times. Norm DeWitt reports

May/June 2015

Issue 173

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Race victory and world record for *Daytona – February 1964*

Mike Hailwood set Daytona alight when he rode to victory in the first US Grand Prix in February 1964, but not before he set a new one-hour world record on the same morning around the famous Florida banking.

Surprise challenger for the MV star in the 41-lap race around the 3.1-mile circuit, one of five different configurations available, was Benedicto Caldarella, pictured leading Mike. The Argentinian eventually broke the gearbox on the factory Gilera, but for 14 laps kept Hailwood and the MV honest.

With Caldarella out, Mike cruised the victory, lapping runner-up Phil Read, Matchless G50, twice. John Hartle, Norton, led home Canadian Mike Duff, South African Paddy Driver, Matchless G50, with the first American home, Bud Parrott, sixth on his disc-braked Manx.

Before lining up for the race Mike used the full two-and-a-quarter-mile banking, and against Count Agusta's wishes flew the MV round to cover 144.83 miles in the hour, and with it claim the World One Hour record.



Mike



Paddock Gossip

>>The latest straight from the paddock >>

NEWS BRIEF

>>BRITS SEEK LIFELINE

Team UK's stunning victory in Australia's 2015 International Island Challenge may have been the last hurrah for the Brits.

Team manager, Roger Winfield, announced to *Classic Racer* that he is retiring from his engineering business and will need a major naming sponsor for the UK team to return and defend its crown.

"I have a direct involvement with seven bikes in this event and I own five-and-a-half of them (Aussie Ian Hopkins owns the Harris frame on John McGuinness's F1)," he said. "I won't commit to the event if I can't bring at least six bikes out."

Winfield has spent tens of thousands of pounds and 10 years competing at the Island Challenge. In recent years he and team lynchpin, Jeremy McWilliams, have upped the ante, bringing in new machinery and some of the UK's hottest riders.

"Getting the bikes prepared for shipping to Australia so soon after the Manx Classic TT can be a logistical nightmare but the Phillip Island circuit owners have always been a great help," Winfield said.

"However, to continue we need a naming sponsor who is looking for worldwide exposure. Now that I am retiring from my business I won't have the financial resources to spare."

The Island Challenge is Australia's biggest motorcycle race meeting behind the Phillip Island round of MotoGP and World Superbikes. More than 5000 people follow the event in the UK via the Aussie internet live timing site computime.com.au

HC

>>SOUTHERN 100 CHEQUE

Eddie Lowey, a retired MHK and MLC, on behalf of the Cockfield Trust, presented Southern 100 Racing with a cheque for £10,000 to assist the race organisers with the purchase of a new, covered grandstand.

The covered stand, when in place, will further enhance the facilities for enthusiasts watching the races on the Billown Course.

NMM ROTARY RACING

William Dunlop has joined the newly formed Team National Motorcycle Museum Racing for the 2015 Classic TT Races presented by Bennetts. The museum, based in the West Midlands, is home to the largest collection of British motorcycles in the world with more than 100 marques.

Dunlop will ride one of the museum's original and iconic Rotary Nortons from the 1992 British Championship season in the Motorsport Merchandise Formula 1 Classic TT Race on Monday, August 31, 2015.

Dunlop, who has three podium finishes in the TT Races Supersport class from the last three years, also finished runner up in the inaugural Bennetts 500cc Classic TT Race in 2013.

Short circuit racers Steve Spray, Trevor Nation and William's father Robert brought the Rotary Nortons to the fore in the 1980, with Steve Spray winning the 1989 British Championship and both Nation and Dunlop claiming podium finishes in the 1990 TT Formula 1 TT Race. Robert Dunlop also won the North West 200 on the Norton in the same year.

However, it is Steve Hislop's 1992 Senior TT win on the Norton after a race-long battle with Carl Fogarty and Yamaha that everyone remembers.

Brian Crighton, the original Rotary Norton engineer, who will be joining Team National Motorcycle Museum for the Isle of Man project said: "This bike was originally designed and conceived for short circuit racing so we have a lot of work to do to adapt it for the challenges of the TT Mountain Course, which is a unique and hard place to race. The challenge we are facing is very similar to the challenge that the Norton faced in 1992 adapting Steve Hislop's bike."

James Hewing, director of the National Motorcycle Museum, said: "The founder of the museum, Roy Richards, had a huge passion for British bikes, particularly Norton, and he always liked to see the bikes actually running rather than just being displayed. I'm sure that he would have approved of this campaign and his two sons are right behind us.

"This is a great project and I'm particularly pleased that we have got Brian Crighton on board as we couldn't even begin to try to do what we are doing without him as part of the team."

As well as the Motorsport Merchandise Formula 1 race, the museum will also be supporting the 'Norton the Rotary Years' parade lap. Scheduled for Monday, August 31, it will see 15 Rotary Nortons appearing on the Mountain Course ridden by some of the original riders associated with the brand including Trevor Nation and Steve Spray as well as riders who will represent some of the other great names who rode the bikes including John McGuinness representing Hislop on the 588 NRS Norton.

All of the bikes will also be on display throughout the four days of the Classic TT festival.

A clearly delighted William Dunlop said, "With my father's history on the bike this was too good an opportunity to turn down. It was his favourite bike as it was a real challenge to ride and the Isle of Man will be a great place to race it."

"The Classic TT is now my favourite meeting of the year so I'm particularly excited to be on the Rotary Norton."





AGO RETURNS TO CADWELL

Giacomo Agostini will join a host of two-wheeled stars for a major new event, the International Classic, when he returns to Cadwell Park on July 25-26. Ago, the most successful rider in World Championship history, will meet fans and ride a 500cc MV Agusta during the venue's two-day celebrations.

The International Classic will feature guest appearances from legendary riders, with parades, demonstrations, live music, air displays and a packed programme of two-wheeled competition. Building on the success of the *Classic Racer*-supported 80th anniversary celebration meeting at Cadwell Park last year, which attracted a huge crowd, the most popular elements of the anniversary event have been retained, but with the full racing programme supporting it.

Ago returns to the Lincolnshire track where he once battled contemporary rivals in front of huge crowds. The 15-times World Champion will be joined by Phil Read, John Cooper, Jim Redman, Derek Chatterton, Alex George, Mick Grant, with more stars still to be announced.

On-track action will feature three special races from last year's anniversary meeting, The Charles Wilkinson Trophy (pre-1990 Grand Prix two-strokes, from 175cc to 750cc), the revived Tommy Wood Trophy (pre-1992 Superbikes, from 400cc to 1100cc), and the Classic King of Cadwell (pre-1972 machinery, from 251cc to 750cc).

Also on the programme are International Classic Grand Prix and Superbike races, the International Historic Racing Organisation for 1945-72 Grand Prix machinery, The Lansdowne Classic Series for pre-1963 machines, and the Camathias Cup for classic sidecars.

The racing, demonstrations and parades will be organised by MotorSport Vision Racing (MSVR) team, which operates the MCE Insurance British Superbike Championship.

Off-track entertainment will include historic vehicle and classic bike displays from collectors' and owners' clubs, motorcycle trial demonstrations, question-and-answer sessions with guest stars, live music, air displays, and trade stands.

Jonathan Palmer, chief executive of circuit owner MSV, said: "Last year's 80th anniversary meeting at Cadwell Park met with a hugely enthusiastic response, which proved just how popular classic bike racing at Cadwell Park is. I decided to build on this and create the best historic motorcycle event in the country for 2015."

"I am thrilled that an amazing cast of bike racing legends have jumped at the chance to be involved and absolutely delighted that one of my childhood heroes, Giacomo Agostini, has accepted my invitation to head our list of stars."

Tickets for the International Classic are available from £20 with free entry for children under 13. For more information call 0843 453 9000 or email cadwellpark@msv.com

Welcome



It's been a really sad time over the last few months with the passing of so many legendary names from our sport. Our tribute to Derek Minter, the undisputed King of Brands, in the last issue seemed like a great way to enjoy for a second time some of the great moments in his illustrious career, and from your feedback it really hit the spot. Thanks for your kind words.

In this issue we carry a small tribute to Nick Nicholls, one of the sport's best photographers. Nick had been battling illness for some time and, after being so active for so long, was struggling to come to terms with not being able to get out and about to enjoy the sport he loved.

I'm proud to have been able to call Nick a friend and we were both delighted when he passed his magnificent collection over to Mortons Archive. Nick knew I work closely with Jane, our archivist, and he knew his life's work would be treasured, but more importantly used on a regular basis. There isn't an issue of *Classic Racer* that goes by that doesn't include Nick's work, so through these pages he lives on. RIP my friend.

Just as *Classic Racer* went to press we learned of the passing of Frank Perris. If ever anyone deserved the title gentleman then it was Frank. Always immaculately dressed, always smiling and always delighted to talk motorcycle racing. There wasn't much Frank hadn't achieved in motorcycle racing, from factory Grand Prix racer to top team manager, but you would never know unless you asked him the right questions.

The last few months hadn't been pleasant for Frank or his family. I shall miss our conversations at motorcycling functions, which I'm honoured to have shared. Our mutual friend, Tommy Robb, who knew Frank better than most, has written a fitting tribute in this issue.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Tommy Robb".

NEWS BRIEFS

>>BONANZA BACK

Isle of Man TT legend, John McGuinness, will headline the Mallory Bike Bonanza, which returns for a second year over the weekend of July 10-12.

McGuinness will be showcasing his own collection of motorcycles as he takes to the track. Local hero, Ray Stringer, will also be reliving one of his greatest triumphs, the victory in the 1991 TransAtlantic Challenge Match Races.

Other racing legends expected to be in attendance include Steve Parrish, Alex George, Rex Butcher, John Cooper, Colin Seeley, Paul Smart, Ryuichi Kiyonari and Chas Mortimer, with many more big-name guest names still to be announced.

This year's event sees the addition of two International Classic Grand Prix feature races on Sunday, organised by former French Grand Prix racer, Eric Saul. Riders who will be chasing the victories include Bernard Fau, Ian Simpson, Guy Bertin and William Gougy.

Away from the track, more than 20 motorcycle owners' clubs have already signed up to take part in Club Central, promising a great display of machinery. And there will be live music on both Friday and Saturday evenings.

Real Motorsport director, Eddie Roberts, said: "We're really excited that the Bike Bonanza is returning again this year, last year was hugely successful and it was organised in such a short space of time, so with more time to prepare this year we know that it can only get better."

"Having the TT legend that is John McGuinness joining us and with his own collection of motorcycles on display for the first time ever, well that really is going to be something special." For more information visit www.malloryparkcircuit.com

>>SURPRISE FOR TAUBMAN

At the recent Southern 100 Annual Dinner, which kick-started the celebrations of the diamond jubilee of the Southern 100, the clerk of the course, Phil Taubman, was rendered speechless after being presented with a decanter set in recognition of his 60 years' service to the races on the Billown course, which were first run in 1955.

In 1955, as today, the road race organisers rely heavily on volunteers to help set up the course and among them in early 1955 were two teenagers who were jumping on and off the wagon humping bales to get the course ready. These two became life-long best of friends; they were the late Gordon Clague and Phil Taubman.

At this time the races were run by the Southern Motorcycle Club Committee, which Phil joined in 1961, and then became a member of the Southern MCC Race Committee in 1964.



FOGARTY STARS

Carl Fogarty headlines the 2015 Llangollen Motorcycle Festival, which takes place on August 1, when fans will get a chance to meet the World Superbike ace and recent winner of I'm a Celebrity.

The 49-year-old winner of four WSB titles and eight world crowns will open the two day family-friendly event, spend the day meeting fans and provide plenty of opportunities for autographs and photos.

Carl said: "I'm looking forward to being back in Wales in August for LlanBikeFest. I was at the Llangollen show a few years ago and received a great reception – but now I hear the show is bigger and better, so it promises to be a fantastic weekend for anyone who loves their bikes."

The site has previously hosted successful bike shows – the last in 2011 – but LlanBikeFest 15 is being

organised by a new team of local motorcycle enthusiasts, led by Harry Edwards.

Harry said: "The opportunity to meet Carl will be the icing on the cake for what promises to be a fantastic celebration of every aspect of motorcycling."

The Llangollen International Motorcycle Festival at the town's pavilion is set amid some of Britain's best biking roads – at the foot of the Horseshoe Pass and its famously bike-friendly Ponderosa Café, and on the edge of the Snowdonia National Park.

On-site attractions will include displays, stunts, demonstrations, trade and club stands, plus bands and evening entertainment. There will also be ride-outs from the site to explore some of the area's most beautiful roads and scenery.

For more information go to www.llanbikfest.co.uk

IoMSPC SPONSORSHIP

The Isle of Man Steam Packet Company is to continue its longstanding title sponsorship of the International Southern 100 Road Races. The company has been title sponsor for more than 15 years.

In recognition of the event's diamond jubilee, held from July 6-9, the Steam Packet Company has also increased its financial support, allowing organisers to develop the meeting for the future. For 2015, the increased support will allow the Southern 100 Club to host celebratory parade laps featuring former champions.

The Past Champions Parade Laps will take place between races on Championship Day, July 9. The riders taking part are to be confirmed, but they are expected to include leading road racing stars past and present.

Steam Packet Company chief executive, Mark Woodward, said: "We are very proud to have been long-time supporters of the Southern 100, as title

sponsor for so many years. Every year the organisers put on one of the most popular meetings on the road racing calendar, which brings fans and riders from all over the world to join the action on the Billown course."

"As the event marks its landmark 60th anniversary, the organisers have some exciting plans for the future and we are pleased to be able to increase our financial support which will help them further improve the meeting for fans, racers and teams."

Southern 100 Club chairman, Phil Taubman, who has been involved with the races since they started in 1955, said: "The club is very appreciative of the additional sponsorship by the Isle of Man Steam Packet Company, which has been our title sponsor since 1999."

"In 2015, it will enable the club to invite past solo champions to take part in a number of parade laps around the Billown course as part of our 60th diamond jubilee celebrations."

PRE TT CLASSIC

Before entries closed for the Blackford Financial Services Pre-TT Classic Road Races more than 140 entries had been received for the six solo plus sidecar races, which are held on Saturday and Sunday, May 30-31, with practice on Friday, May 29.

Long-time rivals, Bill Swallow, Alan Oversby and Roy Richardson, with 36 wins between them return, hoping to add to their impressive tally. Jamie Coward also returns after missing most of last season through injury. The Yorkshireman will be riding the 750cc Mistral Kawasaki, which was ridden to victory in 2014 by Dean Harrison.



Scot Ewan Hamilton will be endeavouring to bring his 250cc Suzuki home ahead of the field in the quarter-litre race which has so far provided him with three race victories at Billown. He has also added a 500cc Matchless to his stable this year.

Winning sidecar driver Eddy Wright, with three wins to his name, has a new passenger this year with Kieran Clark in the chair. Wright is among the 16 crews entered for Camathias Cup, now in its third year. Sidecar crews from the Netherlands, Switzerland, Belgium and France join the line-up.

NEWS BRIEF

>>INSURANCE PARTNER

Footman James is now the exclusive insurance partner to the National Motorcycle Museum, based in Solihull in the West Midlands.

The scheme includes sponsorship of museum's race team for the Isle of Man Classic TT, when the team will run Northern Ireland's William Dunlop on the Norton Rotary (see lead story).

Footman James has a long and established relationship with museum and insures its entire collection of motorcycles.

Footman James director, David Bond, said: "We look forward to further developing a close working relationship with the National Motorcycle Museum and ensuring that our presence in the motorcycle insurance industry benefits keen riders and their bikes."

Museum director, James Hewing, said: "We are really pleased to be entering into this partnership with Footman James in 2015. Teaming up with such an industry stalwart is part of our strategic vision to bring mutually beneficial services and assistance to bike enthusiasts."

MORE SUPPORT FOR MOUNT

England's only real road-race circuit, Oliver's Mount, Scarborough, has secured support from SorryMate.com for the 2015 season.

Situated just five minutes from the centre of busy seaside town Scarborough, the races have been likened to a 'miniature TT by the seaside'. Edge of your seat racing, the closest action seen at any race venue, friendly locals and a stunning setting are all key features that make Oliver's Mount unique.

With a racing heritage that dates back to 1946, Oliver's Mount Race Circuit has a rich history of motorcycle racing and has seen many of the great riders race at 'The Mount' over the years.

Peter Hillaby, circuit director at Oliver's Mount, said, "Motorcycle accidents are something that we all want to avoid but unfortunately on occasions do happen. SorryMate.com is a great company that is out there representing the interests of motorcyclists in the UK."

"For us, the motorcycle enthusiast fans at Oliver's Mount are loyal to the venue and while we hope none of them ever have an accident; it's great to know SorryMate.com will be there for them if they ever do."

Fergus Dalgarno, Sorrymate.com founder and owner added: "We are really excited to be supporting Oliver's Mount in what we are sure will be a landmark year for England's only true road-race circuit."



HOCKING TROPHY SOUGHT

A Newport-born motorcycle racer, who became a world champion in his chosen sport, is to have his achievements immortalised in print.

In 1961, Gary Hocking rode to global success in the sport's 350cc and 500cc categories before a range of factors prompted his retirement, followed by a switch to car racing.

That latter career proved tragically short, however, as he was killed during practice for the Natal Grand Prix in South Africa shortly before Christmas 1962. He was just 25 years old.

Roger Hughes, from Christchurch, Newport, has spent two years immersed in research for a book on Mr Hocking's life that he hopes will be published next year. He is hoping *Classic Racer* readers might be able to help him solve a mystery that has arisen from his efforts.

In the aftermath of his untimely death, an award – known as the Gary Hocking Trophy – was awarded annually on behalf of the now defunct Newport and Gwent Motor Club, for the best achievement in road racing.

Mr Hughes unearthed a cutting from the local paper, The Argus, from the mid-1960s showing the inaugural winner, Malcolm Uphill from Caerphilly, being presented with the trophy by Mr Hocking's mother Marjorie.

"It's a very handsome trophy and I'd love to be able to track it down," said Mr Hughes, a former BBC sports reporter and producer of sports programmes, who now works in a freelance capacity.

"The cutting is the only clue I have though, because the club doesn't exist anymore. I don't know how many other people won the trophy, and most importantly, who the last winner was. If it is still around, it is likely to be with them or their family."

Mr Hughes hopes his biography on Mr Hocking, who lived with his family in Newport until they emigrated to what was then called Rhodesia – now Zimbabwe – when he was 10, will be published next year.

Mr Hocking, born in 1936, stayed in Rhodesia when the rest of the family moved back to Newport in the mid-1950s. They had emigrated in 1947 when his father got a job on the Rhodesian railways.

His first motorcycle was a means of transport to and from his factory apprenticeship in the city of Bulawayo, where on Saturday



Gary Hocking leads MV team mate Mike Hailwood.

afternoons he used to race around the streets with friends. During this time he was spotted by a motorcycle racer called Ken Robas, who set him on the road to a career in the sport. "He spotted that Gary had the talent to succeed and he had the contacts to help him," said Mr Hughes.

By the end of the decade he was making his mark alongside some of the sport's greatest names, including Geoff Duke and John Surtees, winning Isle of Man TT titles and many other major races, which resulted in his becoming a dual world champion in 1961.

Disillusionment with aspects of the sport on and off the track prompted his early retirement,

and that switch to car racing was cruelly cut short after just a few months.

Several years ago, Mr Hughes came across Mr Hocking's grave in Christchurch cemetery, Newport, and his intrigue at the gravestone's inscription, which mentions the world titles, eventually led to his current project.

"A lot of the other motorcycle champions going back many years, including Gary Hocking's contemporaries, have had books written about them," said Mr Hughes. "He is well known and remembered in the world of motorcycle racing, but the more I learned about his story, the more convinced I became that it is worth telling."

Andy Rutherford

SUZUKI SUPPORTS THE MOUNT

Suzuki is to become a circuit sponsor of Oliver's Mount Race Circuit for the 2015 season and title sponsor of the Barry Sheene Festival, which is held on June 21 and will be known as the Barry Sheene Festival Powered by Suzuki.

Oliver's Mount circuit director Peter Hillaby said: "Oliver's Mount Race Circuit enjoyed the many battles over the years that Barry Sheene had with his rivals around our race circuit. Barry Sheene wowed crowds for many years and to this day people from around the

world travel to see our Barry Sheene memorial on the start and finish line.

"We are thrilled that Suzuki will title sponsor the Barry Sheene festival and we are looking forward to this being the start of a long-term relationship at the venue."

Suzuki GB aftersales marketing co-ordinator Tim Davies said: "We're really looking forward to being involved with Oliver's Mount and the Barry Sheene Festival this year. The guys do a fantastic job of putting on and promoting all of their events. The opportunity to be involved in the Barry

Sheene Festival is obviously something that we couldn't pass up.

"Barry spent most of his racing career with Suzuki GB and is an icon not only for us, but for British motorcycling in general. We're now looking forward to June and getting the show under way."

The four main events taking place at Oliver's Mount Race Circuit in 2015 are Spring Cup – April 11-12 – Barry Sheene Festival – June 20-21, Cock o' The North – July 18-19, International Gold Cup – September 12-13. For more information visit www.oliversmountracing.com

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FRANK PERRIS

A tribute

Frank Perris's final few years were spent receiving his family's love and tender care, as he gradually succumbed to Alzheimer's, which first started to affect him as he was still actively riding Suzuki and Matchless racing motorcycles in international parades in the UK and Europe.

Both Frank and I rode Phil Morris's team bikes in the 100th anniversary of the TT in 2011 when Frank was aged 79. He enjoyed every minute of his lap. It was the 59th anniversary of Frank's first ever TT lap in the 1951 Clubmans TT where he finished 32nd.

As his ability improved throughout the Fifties and Sixties, Frank started riding in all classes, mostly concentrating in the 350 and 500cc on Norton, AJS and Matchless machines.

He was around at the time when the Japanese started to dominate the scene and was quickly snapped up by Suzuki to partner Hugh Anderson, Isao Morishita, Mitsuo Ito, Hans Georg Anscheidt and Ernst Degner and managed to achieve high World Championship placings in 125 and 250 classes, even managing to wrap his over 6ft frame around Suzuki's minuscule 50cc championship-winning machine.

Frank Perris was destined, early in his Continental Circus career, to meet a beautiful female German fan who became such a staunch supporter that she persuaded Frank to marry her. Rita was his biggest asset and finest supporter.

Frank's stylish Suzuki career took him through the Sixties and we had the pleasure of having a tremendous scrap in the 1962 All Japan Grand Prix 125cc class (the first ever international motorcycle race to be held in Japan at the

One of motorcycle racing's most charismatic characters passed away in hospital on the Isle of Wight, on Tuesday March 17, 2015, aged 83, with his wife Rita and daughter Tara at his bedside.

Suzuka circuit,) which is owned by Honda.

It was a memorable day in many ways as both Mr Honda and Mr Suzuki were on the podium to congratulate us both on finishing winner and runner up.

At the end of his successful Suzuki career, which finished when Suzuki pulled out of racing in 1967, Frank carried on racing privately sponsored TD2 and TZ Yamahas with success. He also and finished third in the 1971 TT, on Suzuki GB's Daytona Suzuki, in the 500cc class behind Giacomo Agostini (MV) and Peter Williams (Matchless).

Frank was born in Canada in 1931 before coming to live in Chester in England in 1938, and took part in his first road race at Rhuddlan, North Wales, on a 500cc International Norton, before he got a 'works contract' with the AJS team in 1955 at the Ulster Grand Prix, which was where I first saw Frank race before my own entry into the world of Grand Prix racing.

In 1972 Frank became the team manager of the Norton Villiers team competing on Commando based Norton engines. After two years of fielding a strong team of British riders including Peter Williams, Phil Read, Mick Grant and Dave Croxford. After varied successes the

group ran out of money and the team was disbanded.

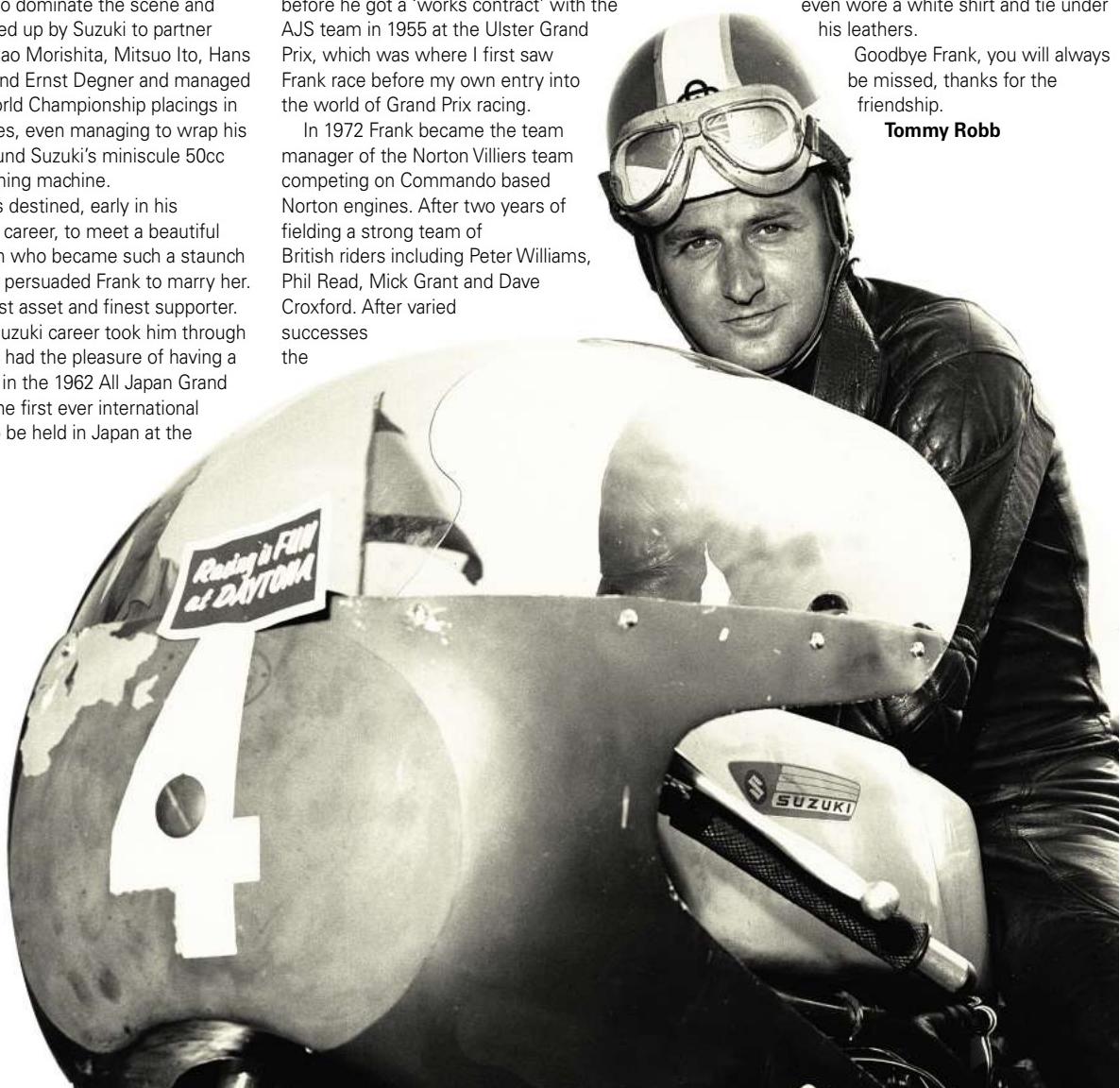
The Perris family eventually moved to South Wales and at the beginning of the new millennium Frank came back into the bike scene when Phil Morris of Oswestry brought both Frank and myself out of retirement to ride his parade Suzuki replica and Honda RC163 replica for the next seven or eight years, until illness struck us both.

Frank and Rita then moved to the Isle of Wight a few years ago to be close to their daughter and her husband.

Frank Perris was a true gentleman and admired everywhere. He had the highest sense of dress style in the paddocks of the word. In his early days at the start of the Fifties he even wore a white shirt and tie under his leathers.

Goodbye Frank, you will always be missed, thanks for the friendship.

Tommy Robb





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FRIENDS REUNITED

Dear Malc

Last year Penny, my wife, asked what I wanted to do for my 60th in May 2015. I didn't really have to think as I've wanted to go back to New Zealand, where I spent most of my racing career after the Isle of Man, for a long time to have a look at their classic racing scene. I have many contacts out there and considered taking my Aermacchi over but wanted to see how things worked before deciding.

Anyway as it's winter in May we flew over business class a month ago (no, I'm not made of money, I have none left now!) for three weeks with friends and took in their Classic Festival at Hampton Downs.

It was brilliant weather and a great day's racing, with even three Aermacchis out, Bill Swallow on the one that Chris usually rides. While wandering around the paddock there was a table with Hugh Anderson signing copies of his book and next to him another bloke selling posters and T-shirts to promote the meeting.

As it was really hot we both had sun hats and glasses on so didn't really take much notice of each other. Penny said you must have a poster and T-shirt so I spoke to him and requested one of each.

The voice from under the other bloke's hat said: "Love to sell the man who started the 1977 Junior Manx Grand Prix alongside me, both of us on Aermacchis, a T-shirt and poster." Both hats and glasses off, conversation was very brief from both sides simultaneously FLEMING from him, GOURLAY from me.

It was over 37 years since we last spoke to each other and we had a good old chat. Andy (Gourlay) now has a couple of really nice F2 Ducatis that he sponsors a couple of riders on in the BEARS championship and asked me if I would like to come back in 2016 and ride them in the Ruapuna Reunion Parade, which I gratefully accepted.

He told me of how he bought his Metisse brand new from Geoff Monty and wondered



what had become of my bike. When I showed him some images he was amazed, and even more so when I told him that not two weeks before flying over I was standing next to his old Metisse chassis in Cleve Brightman's workshop.

Pete Fleming
Via email

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BRIDGESTONE MEMORIES

Dear Malc

It was good to be reminded of my Bridgestone race bike; thank you Bill Smith, I thought I might fill out the story a bit for you. It was 1969, not 1967 when we were running it, and the first person to race it was Ivor Greenwood, who fell off when dicing for the lead with Cecil Crawford.

It was not his fault; the exhausts were a bit low initially and they grounded out. I rode it a couple of times myself, at Cookstown 100 and the Leinster races which were held that year at Mondello Park; I think I got a couple of thirds.

The late Tom Herron rode it at Oulton Park; he got a third I seem to remember, and the late John Williams also had a ride on it at Dundrod. He didn't get to practice and had to start from the back of the grid but was really carving through the field when it broke a cylinder stud and he had to retire.

UP FOR GRABS NEXT TIME...

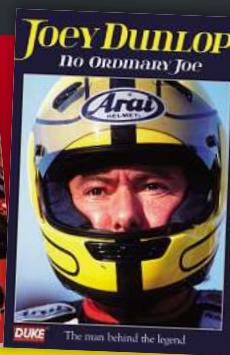
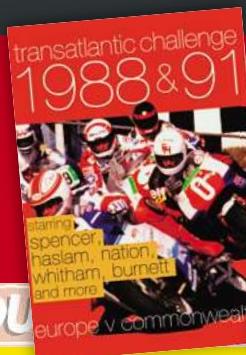
Two fantastic DVDs worth a combined £31.98 – Joey Dunlop: No Ordinary Joe and Transatlantic Challenge 1988 & 91. So, what are you waiting for? Get that letter done!

Michael McGarrity also rode it at a number of races, he had some good results, but I recall he fell at the Mid Antrim 150 when dicing with the late Brian Steenson for the lead; he still complains about the amount of skin he lost from his backside.

We took it up to the NW 200 that year where Bill (Smith) used it for a few laps in practice, but we couldn't organise a high enough gear for it, so Bill used his Honda in the race. Even so it was doing in excess of 140mph and was the fastest 350 there.

The Bridgestone was a fine piece of engineering; six-speed, dry clutch, disc valves, plated cylinders, horizontally split, way ahead of anything on the go at that time. Happily the bike still exists and is in the care of Bobby McCombe at his fine collection of race bikes not so far from me.

A few years back I decided it would be nice to build a replica and use it at the occasional parade



so I bought a tatty roadster but other projects got in the way and it's still a work in progress.

Brian Cartwright, Via email

MORE ON BRIDGESTONE

Dear Malc

Issue No. 172 was the best *Classic Racer* I have ever read, absolutely full of great articles and information from the past providing good reading.

There is just one error to correct! The picture of the said Bridgestone GTR 350 is incorrect as it's a Bridgestone 175 Sports; sorry to be pedantic. I really regret the fact that Bridgestone was forced out of production in 1968 by the other Japanese manufacturers which was a great pity.

Keep up the quality of *Classic Racer*; it's the best read in bike magazines.

Tommy Lawson, Bangor

INTERNATIONAL MAGAZINE

Dear Malc

I have always been under the impression that *Classic Racer* was an English magazine, produced by Mortons Media, of Lincolnshire, so why have you adopted the bl***y stupid American hash symbol instead of the normal English No. or Number?

I noticed this on the cover of issue No. 172, as well as a number of times in the letters page. We do not expect the Americans to adopt our symbols, so why should we adopt theirs? This 'Americanism' really gets up my nose and, although I have been a subscriber to *Classic Racer* for many years, I am thinking seriously of cancelling my subscription.

I recently wrote to John Milbank, the editor of *Motor Cycle Monthly*, to which I also subscribe (in fact I subscribe to five mags) with regard to curb weight and kerb weight, and, I am pleased to say, this has been corrected.

The magazine is very good, but I am sick and tired of all this Americanisation.

John E West
Ruthin, Denbighshire

You are correct John when you say *Classic Racer* is produced in sunny Lincolnshire, but it is in fact a truly international magazine with virtually as many readers spread around the globe, with very many in the USA, as it has in the UK.

Please don't let the hash tag, which is universally used these days, deprive you of what you describe as "a very good magazine".
Malc

THE MINT REMEMBERED

Dear Malc

I was very sad to hear of the death of Derek Minter in issue 172. He was a fantastic rider, very neat, fast, stylish and could get the best out of any machine especially a Manx Norton.

People said he kept himself to himself, as Brian Kemp stated not very outgoing!

In my case I found him very helpful, with a good tip when I had just started racing in 1964. Somewhat battle-scarred after coming off my Gold Star at Castle Combe Derek walked over, enquired what had happened and gave a piece of advice I have always remembered.

He said, I expect you feel a bit stiff and second-hand at the moment, but when you get home, run a bath, go to the kitchen and get a tin of Coleman's mustard (powder) and empty into bath. Stay in bath for a good soak, you may look as if you have jaundice but it really helps with stiffness and reducing bruising and it really works.

Keep up the good work with best wishes to you all at *Classic Racer*.

Don Grant, Langford

PRAISE INDEED

Dear Malc

Firstly the compliments of an old former TT winner and Continental Circus rider of the 70s on an excellent magazine. You and your contributors are able to bring out the atmosphere of the period in print which is remarkable and generally speaking the accuracy is commendable.

However I would like to correct a point or at least an inference in the excellent TT Boycott story in the January/February issue of the magazine by my good old friend Bruce Cox.

In it he says that I returned to the TT in 1974 when the ACU started to pay sensible appearance money. This is not strictly true because after I won the 1972 125cc TT, in which Gilberto Parlotti had so tragically been killed and the large safety outcry started, I was entered again in 1973 TT races but non-started because I had been injured two weeks previously in the horrific accident in the 250cc Italian Grand Prix at Monza which claimed both Jarno Saarinen's and Renzo Pasolini's lives.

I accepted the risks that the TT course offers but felt that we all should be better rewarded for performing in the Island and never at any time said I wouldn't race in the Island after 1972.

While writing I wanted to compliment Paul Phillips and his team for their efforts in promoting the Classic TT. I have been lucky enough to have been invited back the last two years to ride in the Classic Parade laps and the whole event captures the spirit of the Island during my period of racing.

For any of your readers that have not been or were too young to experience this golden era of racing you must go; a brilliant experience.

Keep up the good work,
Chas Mortimer, Via email

Good to hear from you Chas and on behalf of the whole *Classic Racer* team sincere thanks for your kind words.
Malc

MORE MINTER MEMORIES

Dear Malc

What a shock to see that Derek Minter has passed away; he was my hero until I saw Hailwood ride at the 1967 TT. My first recollection was at Brands in 1958, Easter I think, when Minter was beaten into second place by Dave Chadwick. But for me, his best race was the August Bank holiday 1965 August meeting.

In the Senior race Minter had a very poor start and was almost left behind. He carved his way through a star studded field and caught the leader, Bill Ivy, in the last lap only to be held up by a back marker on Clay Hill – what a race, something that I will always remember.

While on the subject of remembering, your Bridgestone feature rings a few bells, especially Steve Murray. He was a regular at Oulton and

Darley Moor club meets around 1965/6. Also, a guy called Mike Pomfret, he rode at Oulton and Darley in mid 60s on 50 and 125 Hondas sponsored by John Hartle (during his retirement period). Does anybody know what happened to these guys?

Lastly, am I right in thinking it's Darley Moor's 50th anniversary this year? If so, how about a feature in your great magazine? I remember going in July 1965. Thanks again for a great magazine.

Chris Page, Via email

Thanks for your kind words Chris and I'm delighted you enjoy the magazine. Steve Murray is still very much alive and kicking, but Mick Pomfret I don't know; perhaps a reader can help?
Malc



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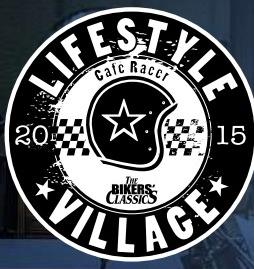
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MICK GRANT

ON THE HONDA NR500

and now for something completely different!

Two minutes. That's how long it took Mick Grant to consider the offer Honda's Gerald Davison made. Somewhere behind the team trucks, hardly hidden from the camera's eye, Davison asked the then Kawasaki rider if he would be interested in joining Honda's Grand Prix team in 1979. Grant said yes and stood on the brink of two of the most challenging, interesting and frustrating years of his long career.

Words: Frank Weeink **Photography:** Honda and Mortons Archive



Grant had already decided that, after years in green, it was time for something different – and the Yorkshireman would certainly find out what different meant in Honda's book.

"Gerald said that this experimental bike was technically going to be absolutely unbelievably advanced," remembers Grant. "It sounded very exciting. I expected that the machine would at least start from where the Hondas had finished in 1967. But we got a completely different thing altogether."

It wasn't about the money, stresses Grant, some 36 years later. "Every time the money comes secondary. I just wanted to be a development rider in Honda's Grand Prix team," says Grant. "We did settle the money after a proper meeting and it was good."

In November 1977 the first rumours about Honda's possible return to Grand Prix racing emerged, 10 years after the Japanese giant had withdrawn from the world's racing scene, leaving a huge void. But the competition still piqued the company and Honda wanted to come back – with a bike that had to be different; it had to be a comeback with a bang.

The Japanese management set itself three goals. Firstly, the new bike would have to make a dazzling impression because of its technical novelties, secondly Honda riders were supposed to return to their winning ways and last but not least, the project would have to serve as a platform for young engineers with fresh new ideas. The Honda management was adamant about one thing: the new racer would have to be an absolute stand-out bike.

Young Takeo Fukui, who would later become Honda's director of research and development and president of

the Honda Racing Corporation, was appointed as the project leader. "We wanted a bike that would shock the world," Fukui later said. And shock, it did. In February 1979, the first engine was running on the Japanese dynos. The OX was certain to make many heads turn, because Honda had opted to build a 100° V4 four-stroke.

Back in its heyday, Honda had always relied on its superb four-stroke technology; why would the company turn away from doing what it was good at? That self-willed, remarkable approach meant that the engine would have to be extremely high-revving in order to produce as much horsepower as the competition's lighter and ultra-competitive Yamaha and Suzuki two-strokes.

The internal secrets of the new racer would prove to be even more jaw-dropping than Honda's unorthodox way of thinking. To ensure maximum combustion, Honda's interpretation of the technical regulations was very creative: the NR500 had four oval pistons with two con rods each and eight valves. With an unsuspected sense of humour, Honda dubbed them UFOs; Ultimately Formed Ovals. Piston sizes were 93.4 x 41 mm; the very short stroke of only 36mm allowed the necessary high revs. Tech wizards got it: the NR500 was in fact a cleverly disguised V8.

By that time, Grant was still anxiously waiting in the wings in England. "The agreement was that my mechanics, Nigel Everett and Paul Dallas, would go to Japan and work on the bike," says Grant. They'd been working on it for two months before I'd done any testing. So they would ring me up from Japan with updates. It was all looking good, they said, and I remember once on the phone I heard the engine really high-revving. It sounded promising."





COMPARED TO NOTHING

But the NR500's engine wasn't the only innovative aspect Grant noticed when he first set eyes on the bike in Japan. It looked like something he'd never seen before, something that could be compared 'to absolutely nothing', he says. The V4 engine was a stressed member of the chassis, whereas two radiators on either side of the bike made for an extraordinary look, as did the tiny screen on the fairing.

The front forks had external springs to make adjusting them easier. The fact that the NR as a whole wasn't exactly a spanner-friendly bike, apparently did not seem to bother the designing engineers much. "They had this fantastic idea and had it worked, it would have revolutionised chassis design. It was called the shell concept. They had a chassis pressed out of aluminium and welded together in the headstock. Then the engine, rear wheel, swingarm and seat went in behind. It was held together by bolts." In theory, the idea was great. It had its flipside too, as Grant would soon find out the hard way.

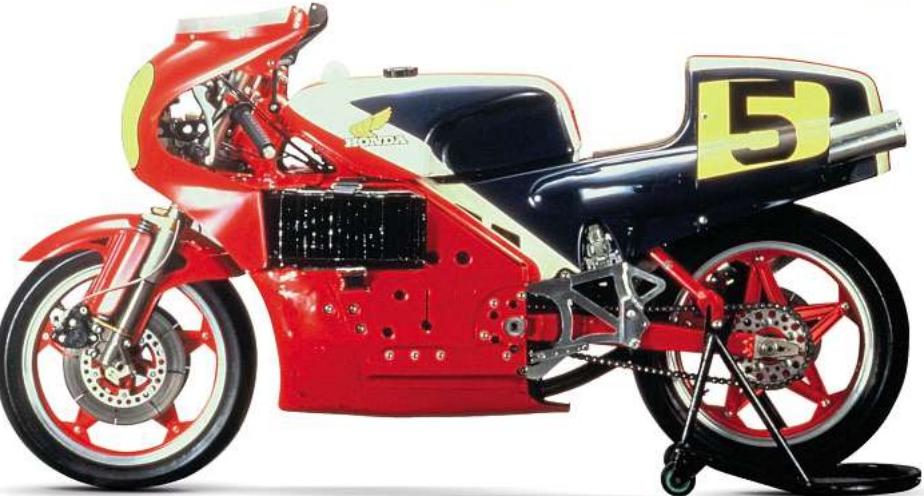
When the 1979 Grand Prix season got under way, Grant and his team-mate, 1977 350 World Champion Takazumi Katayama, had not finished testing the new Honda. On a Suzuki RG500 – that Honda made him pay for himself, insists Grant – Mick finished 10th in the Austrian GP. After his first test on the NR, Grant descended from cloud nine and had his feet planted firmly back on the ground. "I realised that without a radical change, it wasn't going to be competitive," acknowledges Grant.

"They were trying to reinvent the wheel. They started with some very fancy ideas and the nearer they got to where the others were, the more competitive it became. But it was still never going to be strong enough. I remember running the bike on the dyno and the best horsepower I ever saw from one of my engines, was 103-104bhp. At the time Honda also had a two-year-old Suzuki RG500 and that was giving 118bhp. The first year we ran it – and this might sound unbelievable but it is absolutely true – the minimum tick-over speed was 7000rpm.

"The power began at 12,500 and it finished at 17,000 or 17,500. But the bike would rev to 21,000. Plus, in fifth gear you would shut the throttle and the back wheel would hop... because the Honda had no flywheel, there was too much engine braking. It was so difficult to ride. I kept saying to the engineers that I was going into corners slipping the clutch, because it was chattering so badly."

Above: Try as he might hard-riding Japanese, Takazumi Katayama couldn't make the NR500 a winner.

Below: The NR500 in its original form.



CHASSIS CHANGE

And then there was that frame. "It kept cracking. I was testing and every few laps, I'd have to come in to have the cracks welded. It just wasn't going to work. Eventually, in 1980, they went to the steel chassis and that made life a lot better. The first time we ran the bike, it had 16in wheels. No one had ever run them and really, we should have been on 18in wheels. Then we could have compared things. Katayama ran Michelin, I ran Dunlops... I also ran Katayama's bike and every time I braked, the bike sat up. The Dunlops were a lot better. But we had no point to work from."

At the many debriefs with project leader Fukui and engineers, Grant decided the project would benefit most if he told the Japanese the honest truth. "That's what they paid me for. If I said it was nice, then why would I be five seconds off the pace? When you work for Honda, you think it's going to succeed, because the company is so big. The race team thought so too. They didn't understand that they had to make it work. It was a bizarre situation."

Grant thought fighting the many strong and reliable two-strokes with a brand new four-stroke could work. "I, like the rest of the team, thought 'it is Honda, so it will work'. It wasn't until we got to the end of the first year, when you realised that we needed 140 horsepower, if the other Japanese factories put out 130, and a chassis to match. Even then, it wasn't going to work, as it was a lot heavier and far more fragile."

Despite the far from promising test results in Japan and the fact that the NR was not ready, the Honda management decided the NR500 should

make its race debut at the British Grand Prix at the super fast Silverstone circuit. At the end of July two bikes and thousands of spare parts were flown to England. Before the NR's actual Grand Prix debut, the Honda team travelled to Snetterton and Donington to continue testing.

Grant remembers both testing sessions as if

"GERALD SAID THAT THIS EXPERIMENTAL BIKE WAS TECHNICALLY GOING TO BE ABSOLUTELY UNBELIEVABLY ADVANCED"

they happened yesterday. "If I could mention one perfect lap, in my 19-year career, it was on the NR at Donington, honestly. As a rider, you should be very self-critical about your own performance and I would always beat myself up after a ride. But then, I put in a near-perfect lap. The bike was sliding front and rear and afterwards I thought I couldn't ride any better. The reaction from the Japanese guys was 'can you go a bit quicker'. I said 'no one would ever do a better lap than that one on this bike'."

Grant doesn't believe the two very contrasting styles of himself and the more dynamic-looking Katayama interfered with the bike's development. "He didn't go any quicker than me,

it didn't matter what style you had," says Grant. "Takazumi was a good guy. We saw eye to eye when it came to what we thought of the bike. I can put my hand on my heart and say, without a question of a doubt, there wasn't a time that I didn't put in one hundred per cent. I was paid to do a job and it certainly wasn't a matter of losing trust. The engineers had to make the difference. My riding at the time was as good as I'd ever ridden in my whole life. And Takazumi was a former world champion who was also riding well. Our speeds were pretty similar. The riders weren't the problem."

To illustrate that, Grant refers to an incident that took place during open practice at the Silverstone GP. "We went out with 250s and Charlie Williams was just pulling away from me on a standard Yamaha TZ250, down the back straight." Even though, Gerald Davison expressed his doubts about Grant's fitness during the Snetterton test. "I told him I took that as an insult," says Grant. "I was so fit you wouldn't believe. I ran six or seven miles every day. But I never looked particularly athletic. I told him to get on a push bike and do a lap with me in my running gear. I got to wait for him..."

Ron Haslam was brought in to ride the NR500 after Mick Grant's contract wasn't renewed.





"I REMEMBER RUNNING THE BIKE ON THE DYNOMETER AND THE BEST HORSEPOWER I EVER SAW FROM ONE OF MY ENGINES, WAS 103-104 BHP. AT THE TIME HONDA ALSO HAD A TWO-YEAR-OLD SUZUKI RG500 AND THAT WAS GIVING 118BHP."

DOWN IN HISTORY

The 1979 British Grand Prix went down in history as the legendary fight between home hero Barry Sheene and reigning champion Kenny Roberts. As historic as it was, the Honda NR500's racing debut, merely served as a footnote.

"The first race... well, actually, the only race I ever did on the NR, was at Silverstone," says Grant with a wry smile, remembering a hardly heroic performance. During practice it became painfully clear that the NR was no match for the Suzukis and Yamahas – and even struggling privateers outpaced the slow Hondas.

Katayama qualified in 38th position, while 41st quickest Grant finally got a start after another rider withdrew from the race. The Honda bosses who had travelled to England sensed humiliation and the team management took a harsh decision.

"They did not put enough fuel in Katayama's and my bike to finish the race. It would have been embarrassing, because we would've finished last and next to last," says Grant. The Englishman, however, did not even finish one lap. "I crashed in the first corner. We never did wheelies because we didn't have the power. The first year we had little compression and the extra gas went into the gearbox, so that was like a pump. The exit level of the gas was covered by oil. I went down the straight, knowing I wasn't going to finish the race, and I thought we should at least make it look good... I went into first, second, third on the back wheel and everybody in the pits could see the oil

coming on the rear wheel.. I shut the throttle in the first corner and went straight down. It was embarrassing, yeah..." Katayama's race was over after ignition problems. In the Silverstone paddock, Japanese engineers tried to hold back their tears – also rather unsuccessfully.

Three weeks later Grant and Katayama prepared for the French Grand Prix at Le Castellet. In Japan, engineers worked flat out to come up with a stronger, more reliable and five kilos lighter bike. Bigger 26mm magnesium carburettors, replacing the standard 22mm ones, that ultimately brought only a slight improvement. The engineers claimed a new V4 engine was 10bhp more powerful. It did not help Grant and Katayama much. "We went to France and it was almost embarrassing... We got the whole VIP treatment, with waiters in white jackets and we didn't even qualify."

In the second year of his two-year deal, Grant's work was limited to testing, much to his disappointment. A young Ron Haslam was recruited for the races. "It slowly dawned on them that it wasn't going to work," says Grant. "Gerald Davison told me, that after that first year, he'd suggested that they stop. The gap was that big, they weren't going to bridge that."

He paints a picture of a typical debrief at Suzuka. "It was a massive expense then and we used to blow engines quite often. At Suzuka, it was only myself and the Japanese test rider,

who was the Suzuka record holder. I'd done 2:17.8, I think, and the Japanese guy was about two and a half seconds slower than me.

"Mr Fukui went to the drawing board and put Kenny Roberts' lap record on the bottom, 2:12.4. He asked me 'Mick-san, how can we achieve this'. I said 'well, we need another 15bhp and this and that...' Every point I made, he put a time down on the board: one second on horsepower, half a second here, half a second on that... Eventually I brought the time to Kenny's lap record. He thanked me and asked the local guy the same question. He stood up, said '30 horsepower' and sat down. That might have made things 10 times worse than what we had."

"Without a better chassis, it was completely useless. Since then, we've asked ourselves, why did they do it. The only logical reason we could think of, was that back in 1967, the Japanese engineers who looked after the project that Hailwood and Redman rode for, were now in higher management, without the experience of what was happening in Grands Prix at that time."

At a board meeting they would have said 'right, we're going Grand Prix racing again with a four-stroke and we'll give them three years to get a win'. It was the poor guys on the floor, such as Mr Fukui, who faced this enormous task. They were the best guys in the world, but it was never going to work."

FAILED PROJECT

Even after 36 years, Grant's views on the way the NR500 project was dealt with, are quite outspoken. "The project did not fail because there was a shortage of money, it failed because the timing wasn't right for a four-stroke. The fault lay in the people who asked for the project to start. They hadn't done their homework as to what the real world was about. These guys had been in the higher echelons of Honda, doing anything but racing.

"I don't think it was arrogance, it was just that, when they went out in the Sixties, they won almost everything. So why shouldn't they do it again? They didn't understand how the Grands Prix were run then."

At the end of the 1980 season Grant was released from his contract, something that left a bitter taste. "I honestly think I was used as a scapegoat. They kept Ronnie (Haslam) on and they signed Freddie (Spencer) but I was as quick as anyone on that bike," says the now 70-year-old Grant. "It was a major disappointment and yet it was a rich experience – I wouldn't have missed it for the world. I learnt so much. I'm sure I could have had good results on a different bike with a different factory at the time. But I wanted to do well in the Grands Prix."

In the unbelievable Honda Collection Hall at Motegi, the first Honda NR500 is on display. Many of the old Grand Prix bikes around the surprisingly small NR500 are being restored to showcase at special events; Grant knows that NR will probably stay where it is. "I've still got some friends in Japan and they were asked to get it to do a demonstration. But the costs of getting it running, would be phenomenal. It's never going to happen. But yes, I'd love to have a go on it now."

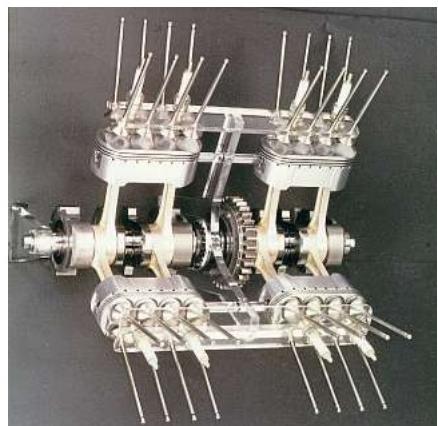
Eventually the Honda management realised that it was involved in a battle that it would never win. The world's biggest bike manufacturer was losing credibility and its racing activities were hardly taken seriously by the opposition. Among journalists, the NR was quickly dubbed the 'Never Ready'.

A win in the States by wonderboy Freddie Spencer as well as a victory in a 200km endurance race at Suzuka by the Honda test duo Kiyama and Abe with the then 130bhp strong NR couldn't hide the fact that Yamaha and Suzuki remained far out of reach in 1981. Spencer's performance at the Silverstone Grand Prix that year was sensational, as he was as high up as fifth, but in the end Spencer's ambitions outweighed the engine's talents.

Once again, things had to change – and once again, they did so, in a radically different way. Honda engineers were already working on a lightweight V3 two-stroke engine. Spencer went on to win two Grands Prix on the new bike and finished a spectacular third in the 1982 World Championship. A year later Fast Freddie clinched the world title; his, and Honda's first in the 500cc class.

In years to come, NR500 technology re-emerged in Honda bikes, and with the NR750, Honda even launched a – very exclusive and expensive – production bike.

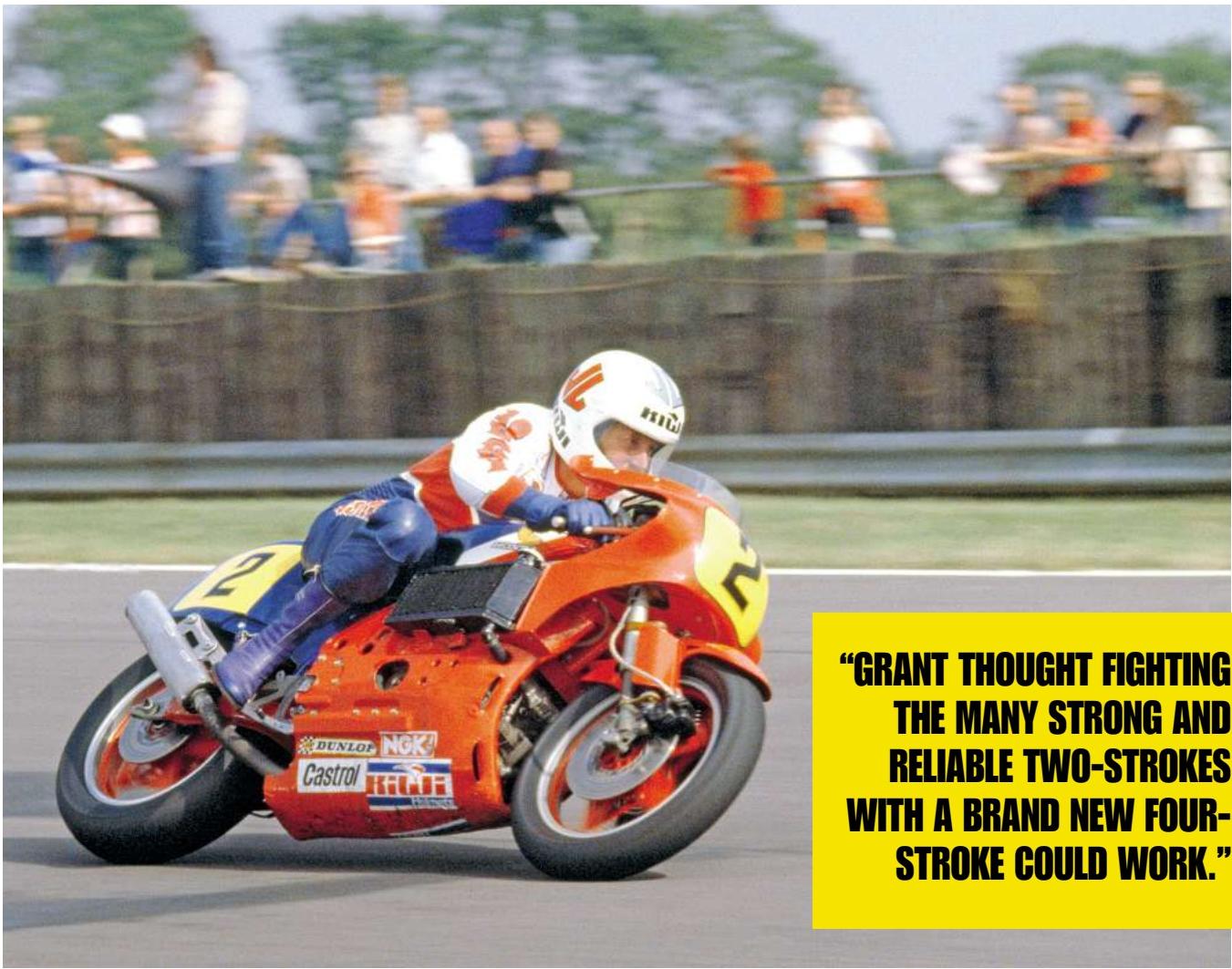
Mick Grant admits he watched the success of the NS500 triple with mixed feelings. "If I have a frustration from that... they already had the three-cylinder two-stroke in the wings when I finished in 1980. If it had been there two years earlier, my career might have taken off again. I was certainly quick enough and I'd proven I could win Grands Prix. Freddie came along and he would have beaten me, but it could've been so different... it's all about timing, I guess."



Lef: Freddie Spencer managed wins on the

This page: You want technology? You certainly got it with the NR500, perhaps the most complex Grand Prix bike ever?





"GRANT THOUGHT FIGHTING THE MANY STRONG AND RELIABLE TWO-STROKES WITH A BRAND NEW FOUR-STROKE COULD WORK."

SCAPEGOAT

Nigel Everett was one of Mick Grant's mechanics at Kawasaki and like Grant, the young Englishman was quick to accept Honda's offer to come and work on the new Grand Prix project. Throughout the years, Everett has built up a reputation as a well-respected restorer of racing bikes, but reminiscing about the Honda NR500, he regards it 'like being involved in the project of a lifetime'.

"I was there for four and a half months, we had two shifts: one worked during daytime, the other worked at night," recalls Everett. "I worked in the engine room, getting to know and build engines all day. They'd then put them on the dynos, exploding them or wearing them out and we'd rebuild them. They were very, very secret about the whole project. You could take no pictures and we had to sign the contracts. It was like something I'd never seen before."

Everett wasn't particularly interested in working on four-strokes, he admits. "It didn't really bother me, to be honest. Engines are engines to me. I was still very young and it was pretty special to be working on a works team. Still, I knew it was something special. As soon as you looked into the engine and saw those oval pistons... Wow! It was a V8 and they dodged the rules and joined two cylinders together. All the stories about the lack of power...

on the dyno, with straight pipes, it was pretty good and fairly reliable too. But as soon as they put the silencers in for the regulations, they lost all the power. The bike was being used to the capability of the frame, so the horsepower wasn't the issue."

As one of only three European mechanics, Everett was amazed to be working with, what could be described as an incoherent group of Japanese engineers. "They (Honda) brought guys in that were working on Honda Accord doors, windshield wipers.... in their eyes, they were designers. If they could design a steering wheel, they could design an engine. And although all the packages were good, they didn't bond. Later they realised it wouldn't work. They were having problems with frames and headstocks getting cracks in them. To try and get one problem, we had to have a base to work from. That's when we had the steel frame made in England. Then you knew the geometry on that would work and it would be a different package."

In spite of all the teething problems, Everett loved the 1979 NR, because it was so different from everything he had seen and worked on before. "That little tiny screen like on a Formula 1 car, the external fork springs... you had all sorts of special tools to work on it. It was just too different. But I learnt so much."

"To this day, I don't think people realise how advanced it was. I honestly think it was a test programme for the cars. I know for a fact that after that they built oval piston F1 engines. I don't think that ever got out. They were hoping it was going to work, of course, but it was a massive PR thing. They got a lot of bad press but they did get a lot of press. They were already working on the three-cylinder NS. They were going from a bike, of which everybody was saying it was no good, to probably the best bike they ever built."

Everett says the project still holds great memories for him. Although he managed to get hold of an original Honda Six piston, he claims it was absolutely impossible to get anything from the NR. "Even when the engines exploded at 22,000rpm... It was like Rice Krispies when they exploded! It was like an aircraft crash investigation when that happened. They got all the parts and tried to make sure they had them all. I would have loved to have had something but everything was documented."

Mick Grant during qualifying for the ill-fated Silverstone outing. Despite the disappointment Grant says he 'wouldn't have missed the experience for the world'.

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GOLDEN ERA FOR ‘THE SOUTHERN’

Before the 1954 Manx Grand Prix success of Derek Ennett, George Costain and Sid Mizen, the Southern Motorcycle Club held its race meetings at Andreas Airfield.

Words: Phil Edge **Photography:** Southern 100 Racing, Dave Collister and Glynne Lewis.

As a result of a double win at the Manx, the club members decided there should be a race in the south of the Island and to hold a meeting on what was to become known as the Billown circuit.

In the early 1950s, the Isle of Man government decided to build a bypass to avoid the town centre of Castletown, and while

traffic was minimal compared with today's motorised Island, the bypass provided an integral part of the new course.

The first meetings to set up the organisation were held in the Station Hotel, now the Viking, in Castletown, which is where the Ennett family lived. This band of gentlemen with foresight also used to meet on a Sunday morning in the control tower at Ronaldsway Airport, with Theo

Watterson. In between landing planes, the time was taken up planning the Southern '100'.

Among the first committee were George Costain and Joe Mylchreest, who officially measured the circuit, using the official 'chain' measure (22 yards) and walked around the course measuring down the centre line of the road. The total official distances was, and still is, 4.25 miles.





1959 – The unmistakable style of Bob McIntyre (Norton), Castletown corner.

TYNWALD AND THE SOUTHERN '100'

The organisers of the proposed new event approached Tynwald, the Island's government for assistance in running this first venture in the south of the Island. The reply, after consideration by the Tynwald Race Committee, was surprising to say the least, the report is shown below:

The Tynwald Races Committee Report on the 1954 major sporting events was presented to the April sitting of Tynwald on April 19, 1955.

The TT accounts for 1954 were approved and the sum of £10,000 was recommended to be given to the ACU to run the 1955 TT Races.

Similarly the Manx Grand Prix accounts were submitted and approved. Tynwald was pleased that the organisers had not requested an increase in their grant for 1955 and approved the same amount as the previous year – £450.

The Southern Motor Cycling Club had also approached the committee for financial support for a motorcycle race to be held in the south of the Island on July 14, 1955. The committee, however, was not prepared to recommend government financial assistance to the race for the following reasons:

We consider the TT Races and the Manx Grand Prix to be established events of universal appeal to motorcycle enthusiasts in Great Britain. We do not think that motorcycle racing should be further extended during the visiting season.

We do not think that, at the date suggested, the season requires 'build up' by staging an event of this character.

We regard the event as a local enterprise – possibly justifying support as such from local commissioners in order to attract visitors into their area from other parts of the Island – but not as an insular event warranting government support.



Derek Ennett – winner of the first 350cc race in 1955.

Despite this setback, the club persevered with organising the first 'Southern 100' and local business man, T H Colebourn, stepped in and put up £100 to secure the races on July 14, 1955.

Happily, since that initial rebuff, the Isle of Man government, via the Department of Tourism, has given its full approval of the Southern 100, along with tremendous support over the years and continues to do so.

Summer frocks and shirt sleeves were the order of the day in 1955 as thousands of spectators crowded the vantage points around the course to witness what was described as an ambitious three-race programme for a first-ever meeting.

The very first race, the 350cc event, was won by Manxman Derek Ennett riding an AJS at an average of 76.79mph.

The 350 was followed by the 250 race, over six laps, 25 miles with Manchester's Dave Chadwick taking the chequered flag at some 65.50mph.

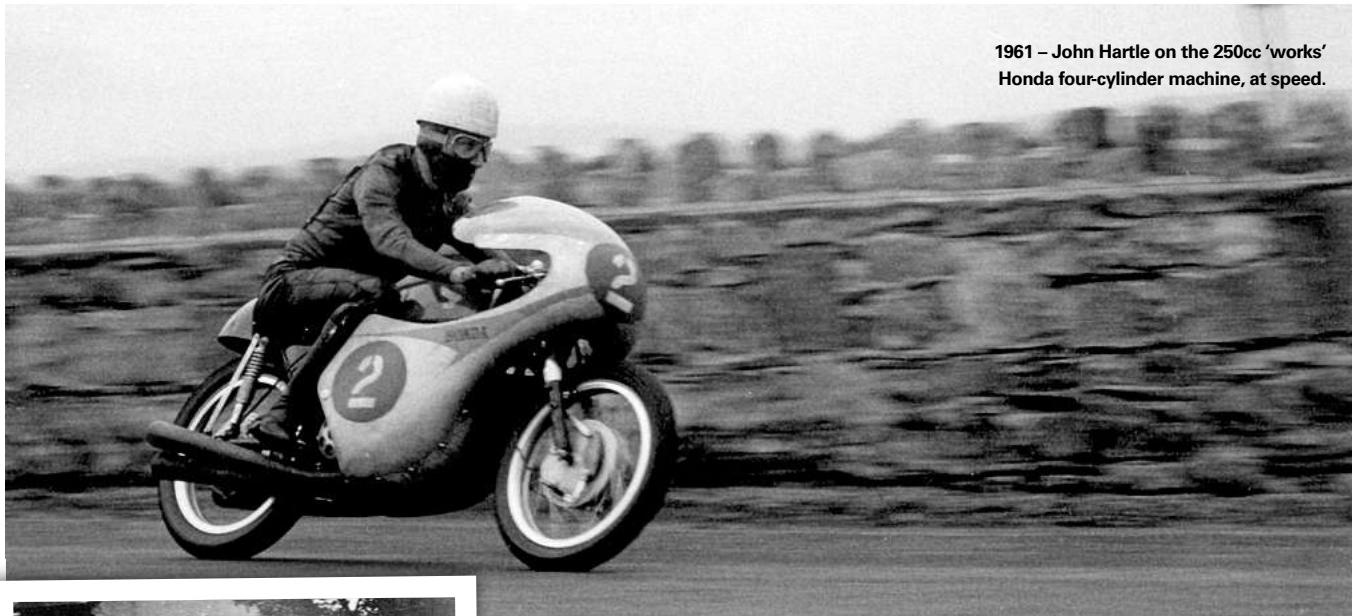
The premier event, the 500cc race, held over 24 laps, a distance of 100 miles and from where the meeting gained its title saw Liverpudlian, Terry Shepherd, take victory by just 100 yards from 350cc winner Derek Ennett.

The three-race programme completed, competitors and officials took part in a gymkhana at the nearby Castletown Stadium.

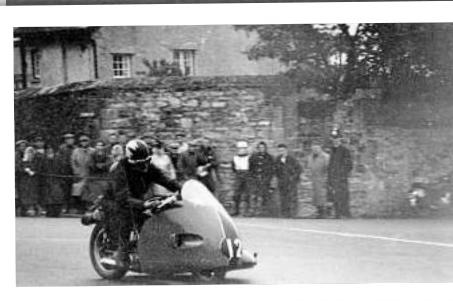
From an 'Open to Centre' status meeting in 1955, the Southern gained national status in 1958 and was included in the British Championships in 1969.

Since then the annual July event has been included in the prestigious Irish Regal Championships during 1992 and 1993 and gained European recognition in 1995, being granted a full FIM International status in 2007.

Sensation hit the Southern 100, when in 1960, after putting up a brilliant riding display to win the Senior, Bob McIntyre was excluded from the result.



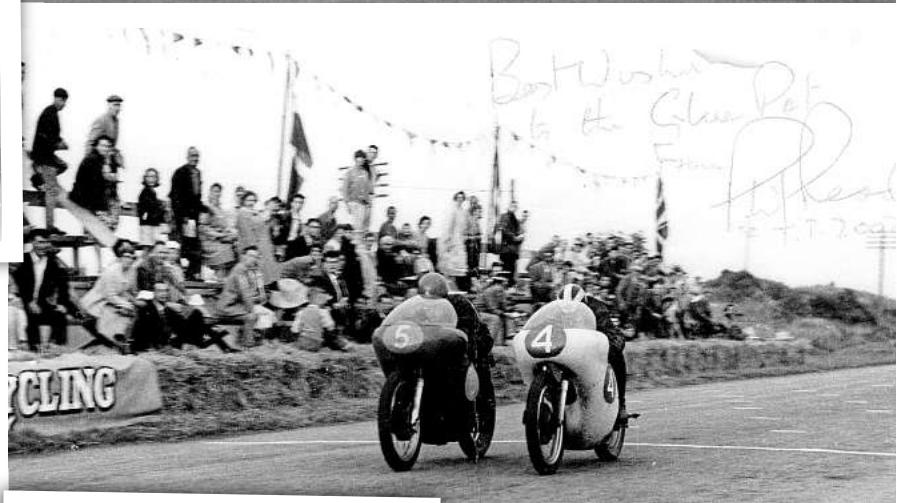
1961 – John Hartle on the 250cc ‘works’ Honda four-cylinder machine, at speed.



Above: 1962 – Charlie Freeman, winner of the first sidecar race.

Right: 1961 – Alan Shepherd (5) and Phil Read (4) dead heat in 350cc race.

Below right: 1975 – Ray McCullough leads Mervyn Robinson at Ballakaighan in the 350cc race.



From the outset of the race McIntyre and Ron Langston were locked in an absorbing struggle for the lead, which was to last until lap six when McIntyre began to pull away. By the end of the 22nd lap McIntyre, who had lapped in 2 mins 59.9 secs to become the first rider to break the three minute barrier, held a commanding lead. Then, remarkably, he pulled in at the end of the paddock and refuelled. Clerk of the course, Bobby Moore, and his assistant, Joe Mylchreest, naturally puzzled, confirmed that regulations did not permit refuelling during the progress of any race. After the race the Scot could do no more than admit he had forgotten to read the rules, and agree that the clerk of the course was correct, adding that he had enjoyed the race.

McIntyre's exclusion promoted Langston to the winner's place on the rostrum.

1961 saw the introduction of a fourth race to the programme for 125cc machines. This race was to introduce diminutive Gary Dickinson, the smallest man in road racing, to the Southern 100 spectators who naturally took him to their hearts.

Luton ace Phil Read became the second rider to do the double and there was the one and only appearance of another legendary rider – John Hartle – who gave a devastating display of high

speed riding on his works Honda-4 taking a predictable victory in the 250 race.

The Junior race provided its own bit of history as Alan Shepherd and Phil Read crossed the finishing line together. The pair had kept close company throughout, Shepherd breaking Chadwick's long-standing class record sixth time round, only to see Read reduce the time still further on the final lap.

The judge's decision declared a dead heat verdict, which proved to be slightly unpopular with spectators on the grandstand, many of whom had their own opinion as to who had won.

The first sidecar race in the Southern 100 was run in 1962 and turned out to be an exciting affair with Charlie Freeman and Fred Wallis disputing the lead to the very end of the nine lap race with Freeman taking the winner's laurels.

The first appearance of the Skitsu, driven by John Worthington, created a great deal of interest in 1965, unfortunately the unconventional outfit never really got going.

It was to be one of the Southern 100's favourite visitors, Ray McCullough, who in 1975 was to become the first man to lap the Billown course at more than 90mph.

McCullough created his bit of history in the 350 race, an event he won after taking the lead at half distance from fellow Irishman Mervyn Robinson, Yamaha. Gradually pulling clear McCullough increased his advantage to 22 seconds over Robinson.

It was Ray's year as no one was to deny him his championship crown. Taking the lead on lap two he dictated the race from the front, fractionally bettering the lap record that he had set up in the Junior race.

Diminutive Ulsterman, Joey Dunlop, on his first visit, proved the sensation of the 1976 series with two second places and a third in Wednesday's qualifying race, then, most important of all, a magnificent victory in the championship race, shattering both lap and race records.

Despite being forced to relinquish the Solo Championship title, Joey Dunlop, was once again a talking point during 1979.



Above: 1976 – Joey Dunlop collecting his first Southern 100 silverware.

Above right: 1983 – Brian Reid on his way to becoming the first rider to lap the Billown course at 100mph.



'THE FIRST CLASSIC RACE TO BE HELD ON THE BILLOWN CIRCUIT WAS A GREAT SUCCESS. BOB HIRST, WHO WENT ON TO A TOTAL OF 15 RACE WINS.'

Three wins and a second were his final tally but his astonishing escape from injury when a steering damper broke at Ballanorris will perhaps be his most remembered feat.

The 1300cc race was eventful to say the least for Joey Dunlop. After stopping at Castletown Corner to remove some tape from a boiling radiator the initial leader found himself in fifth place. A new lap record of 2 mins 36.8 secs soon promoted him back into contention until a near disaster befell him at Ballanorris on lap three. A steering damper broke and jammed leaving Dunlop with no alternative but to head for an open gateway into the field where he jumped off the bike, escaping serious injury. Ballanorris has since been renamed 'Joey's Gate'!

Dave Dean lead from start to finish to win the Solo Championship in the meeting's silver jubilee year 1980, riding a 750cc Yamaha, he had a comfortable win over Steve Cull on his 500 Suzuki, with fellow Irishman Conor McGinn, 351 Yamaha, taking third spot.

Lowry Burton and Martin Murphy aboard their Yamaha won the Sidecar Championship. They lead from start to finish, setting new lap and race records.

Southern 100 Motorcycle Racing took over the organisation of the Southern 100 in 1981.

Twenty-eight years after Terry Shepherd won the first Southern 100 and set the first-ever fastest lap at 80mph, Brian Reid, from Banbridge, Northern Ireland, finally broke the 100 mark on the last lap of his winning ride in the Unlimited race in 1983.

In a final dash for victory after a race-long battle with countryman, Con Law, Reid lapped the 4.25-mile Billown Course in 2 mins 33 secs – precisely 100mph, and carving 3.8 seconds off Joey Dunlop's existing 97.57mph record from 1979.

To describe the 1985 Southern 100 meeting as a success for riders from the Isle of Man would be an understatement. Ramsey's Kenny Harrison

rode to a brilliant hat-trick on his 750cc Yamaha, winning the 1300cc, the Solo Founders 1300cc and the Solo Championship. Castletown's Richard Coates rode his 350cc Yamaha and 250cc Cotton machines to two-second places, beating Irish ace, Gene McDonnell. Artie and Edda Oates rode to a heat win to start the meeting with a local victory.

The Solo Championship race saw Kenny Harrison once again out in front on the big Yamaha – chasing hard once again was Buddy Yeardsley on the Wilson & Collins' RG Suzuki. Richard Coates tangled with Yeardsley at Ballabeg and fell off, forcing him to retire. As the race continued Paul Hunt looked to have the measure of Peter Eaton, that was until 'Big H' slid off at Ballabeg, also retiring from the action. At the flag behind Harrison and Yeardsley, it was Gene McDonnell, Trevor Steele, Andy Cooper and Peter Eaton completing the top six.

1987 saw a revamp of the race programme, firstly the two sidecar heats were dropped and replaced with a two-leg championship, and both over nine laps. The 250cc and 350cc races were run concurrently. Classic machines were introduced to the Billown course, which was to prove very popular. Most important, though was the introduction of Match Races, comprising of teams from England, Ireland, the 'Rest of Britain' and of course the Isle of Man. These races, sponsored by the Steam Packet Company, were to be run over two, 12-lap legs. Nine races in all, which included the established 1300cc race, the Solo Founders and the 'blue-riband' event of the meeting the Solo Championship.

The first Classic race to be held on the Billown circuit was a great success. Bob Hirst, who went on to a total of 15 race wins before retiring from the sport.

Former 1964 Solo Championship winner Selwyn Griffiths enjoyed his first outing for more than 12 years, bringing his Ray Cowles G50 home in

second place saying afterwards: "It was a marvellous experience. After a few laps familiarising myself with the old single, it was as if I'd never been off one."

The new decade saw a revamp of the race programme; the Match Races, were no more in the 11-race programme, which now included an additional Sidecar Class, for Formula 2 machines. The 125cc class returned after an absence of 25 years – to this class was added the new 400cc Supersport class, plus the 600cc Supersport category, while the Solo Founders race was now split into two races, one for Junior, the 125/400 and 350cc machines; the Senior catering for the 600s and unlimited machines up to 1300cc.

Realistically no one predicted anything other than a Dave Leach victory in Thursday's finale to a sizzling Southern 100 week, 1990. But few expected his winning margin to be less than three seconds at the conclusion of the fastest ever race at that time. Hero of the hour was local man Kenny Harrison, who was in sensational form. He pushed the triple TT winner every inch of the way, making him work hard in the late afternoon heatwave for his £600 prize money.

Ulster's favourite son, Joey Dunlop, made a triumphant return to the Southern 100 with six wins.

By far the most spectacular of Dunlop's six wins came in the main 12-lap Ronaldsway Shoe Company Solo Championship race. Joey gave one final tweak of the twist grip to set a staggering new outright course record on the 10th lap. Circulating the 4.25-mile Billown circuit in a shade under two minutes 26 seconds, Joey's average speed was an amazing 104.93mph; the previous best from 1990 was only 102, and before that the 100mph had been the standard for seven years. This supersonic victory brought Dunlop's Southern 100 tally to 16 wins, including a record number of four Solo Championships.



1992 – Phillip McCallen, solo champion.



Left: 1995 – Past winners help celebrate 40 years of the Southern 100.

Below: 1998 – Robert Dunlop, back to winning ways at Billown.

A new race in the 1992 Southern 100 was the Regal 600cc Championship Race, part of one of the main championships, which had been running a number of years in the Motor Cycle Union of Ireland (MCUI), events. Phillip McCallen played a cat-and-mouse game, turning up the wick in the latter stages of the race to ensure victory over rival Johnny Rea in the only round of the Regal Championship outside Ulster.

Double TT winner Phillip McCallen added the Southern 100 Solo Championship to his ever-growing list of titles after a calculated ride on the Turkington Windows Castrol Honda.

One of the most exciting finishes in the 40 year history of the Southern 100 saw Pontypool's Jason Griffiths pip veteran Ulsterman Joey Dunlop to the line by just a fifth of a second in the main Solo Championship race.

Trailing Dunlop's RC45 Honda throughout, 23-year-old Griffiths smashed Phillip McCallen's absolute lap record for the Billown circuit as he forced his way past on the penultimate lap.

Griffiths was surprised to discover that he had set a new lap record on roads still damp in places from early-afternoon rain. His best of 105.08mph was a 10th of a second quicker than the target McCallen set in the post-TT meeting in June.

The 40th running of the Southern 100 brought many past champions back to the Billown circuit to celebrate the occasion as Bob Jackson won his first ever-Southern 100 Solo Championship title after 20 years of trying.

As old as the race meeting itself, Cumbrian favourite Bob scored his maiden success on the Billown circuit as long ago as 1977 on a 350 Lambert Yamaha in what was his second appearance at the Southern.

1997 saw Ramsey-based Welshman Jason Griffiths win one of the most thrilling Southern 100 Solo Championships ever when he smashed lap and race records to pip Bob Jackson by three tenths of a second becoming only the sixth rider, at the time, to retain his Solo Championship title.

Robert Dunlop completed his comeback to full-time racing with a superb win in the Steam Packet 125 race.

Having last ridden the Southern '100' in 1985 (he rode the Steam Packet Races in 1991 and 1992), Robert had to use all his old daring and determination to beat Owen McNally, Ian Lougher and Gavin Lee in what was a humdinger of a race.

The following year saw the 100th Sidecar Race taking place, fittingly in the championship race, which was won by Dave Molyneux and passenger Craig Hallam at record speed.

Former 1987 Southern 100 Solo Champion Ian Bell made history in the last Southern 100 of 1999 when he became the first man to also win the Sidecar Championship title on the same course.

Plumping for the identical compound rear Dunlop tyre as Jim Moodie did in the 1999 Senior TT, Joey





1999 – Ian Bell and Neil Carpenter on their way to making history in the Sidecar Championship.

Dunlop almost suffered the same fate as his Honda Britain team-mate when rubber from the centre of the slick started to peel away in the latter stages of the Solo Championship.

The tyre was in fact the very same spare Moodie had in the pits on Senior day but never used, fitted to a smaller than standard 16½in wheel.

"The tyre works superbly for about 40 miles, then it just starts to rip up," said Dunlop, after his sixth championship win in 23 glorious years at Billown.

He hadn't realised the tyre had almost worn through until he stepped off the bike in the winner's enclosure.

After winning three titles in a row from 1976–1979, Dunlop only contested the Southern on a couple of occasions in the 1980s during the peak of his F1 and Honda Britain career, but he bounced back with another win in 1991 and another two years later.

Blair Degerholm became the first antipodean to win the Southern 100 Solo Championship title in the 45-year history of the races.

But the New Zealander had to smash the outright Billown lap record on his 12th and final circuit of the main feature race of the week to deny an equally determined Welshman, Ian Lougher, what would have been his first championship.

The race was a fitting climax to the first Southern 100 of the millennium, sponsored as a whole by the Isle of Man Steam Packet Company.

2001 saw a complete wipe-out of racing on closed roads in the Isle of Man for 56 years. Only the two world wars prevented the TT and the Manx Grand Prix taking place.

It was the first time the Southern 100 had been cancelled since the first meeting in 1955.

2002 saw 'racing as usual' return to the Billown circuit with Ulster-based Welshman, Ian Lougher, taking the Solo Championship; he won again in 2004 and 2005. Ian also took the coveted Derek Ennett Trophy again in 2007 and 2008.

Right: 1999 - Joey Dunlop, Solo Champion on the Honda RC45.

Below: 2000 – Blair Degerholm, the first Kiwi to win the Solo Championship.



CLASSIC RACER EVENT

In 2003 another Ulsterman took the race victory; Ryan Farquhar, repeating his win again in 2010. 2006 saw Aussie Cameron Donald claim the Solo Championship in his debut year, repeating Joey Dunlop's fate of 1976.

The Dunlop name appeared on the unique trophy again in 2011 and 2012 when Joey's nephew Michael lifted the Solo Championship title.

Guy Martin finally claimed his much sought-after solo championship title in 2009, taking the coveted title again in 2013 and 2014, becoming only the 10th rider to complete the 'double' in the championship race.

The others are: Terry Shepherd 1955 & 1956; Phil Read 1961 & 1962; David Williams 1964 & 1965; Joey Dunlop 1976 & 1977 + 1978; Kenny Harrison 1985 & 1986; Dave Leach 1989 & 1990; Jason Griffiths 1966 & 1997; Ian Lougher 2005 & 2005 + 2007 & 2008; Michael Dunlop 2011 & 2012.

Who will be feted on Thursday, July 9 in Castletown Square at the conclusion of the Diamond Jubilee Isle of Man Steam Packet Company Southern 100 International Road Races and receive the original Derek Ennett trophy – named after that first race winner? Answers on a postcard to...



Guy Martin leads Dean Harrison during the Solo Championship race that Guy won.

WIN

ONE OF SIX COPIES OF SOUTHERN 100 2014 – A DVD REVIEW

We've teamed up with Southern 100 Racing to offer six lucky *Classic Racer* readers the chance to win a copy of the DVD review of last year's exhilarating races worth £19.99 each.

THE PRIZE

The four-and-a-quarter mile Billown course was the scene for a series of epic battles in July last year as the Southern 100 rolled into town. The usually peaceful roads around Castletown in the Isle of Man reverberated to the sound of high-speed motorcycle racing as the best rider in the world battled for championship glory.

Guy Martin, Michael Dunlop and Conor Cummins were all on form but there seemed little they could do to hold back Bradford's Dean Harrison as he wowed the crowds with an exquisite display of speed and skill.

Supersport, Superbike, Supertwin... whatever he turned his hand to it seemed Dean had the edge. That's not to say he had it all his own way with the 650 race providing one of the closest finishes in the history of the event as Dean squeezed out James Cowton by a mere .001 of a second!

The sidecars are always a prominent feature of the Southern 100 meeting and 2014's offering certainly didn't disappoint. The entry boasted the most recognisable names in the sport including the father/son pairing of Ian and Carl Bell and TT sidecar supremo Dave Molyneux who had Benjamin Binns in the chair for the event.

Fresh from breaking his TT duck, after 21 years of trying, Dean's dad Conrad was out to improve his summer still further with his eye

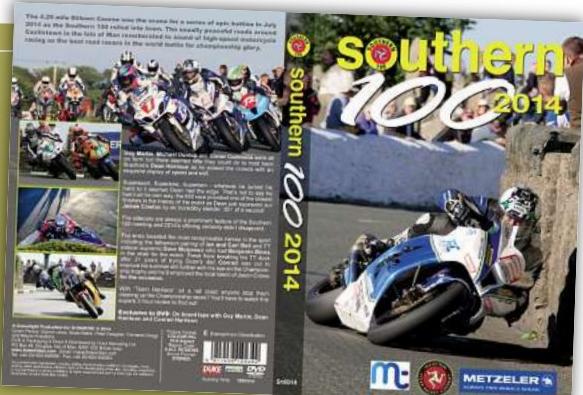
on the championship trophy and he'd employed the local talent of Jason Crowe for the occasion. With Team Harrison on a roll could anyone stop them clearing up the championship races?

You'll have to watch this superb three-hour review to find out! The 192-minute programme contains coverage of all races plus, exclusive to the DVD, it features on-board laps with Guy Martin, Dean Harrison and Conrad Harrison.

You may have been fortunate enough to have been one of the thousands who surrounded the Billown course – this DVD will revive your lasting memories of an excellent Southern 100 in 2014 and assist with the all too frequent withdrawal symptoms. If you missed attending – the programme will ignite your enthusiasm to ensure you make every effort to attend the 2015 Southern 100, which incidentally celebrates its 60th anniversary this year.

HOW TO ENTER

To be in with a chance of winning a DVD, simply visit the *Classic Racer* website – classicracer.com, go to the competition section, fill in the relevant details and submit. It really is that simple. Deadline for entries is Monday, June 1.



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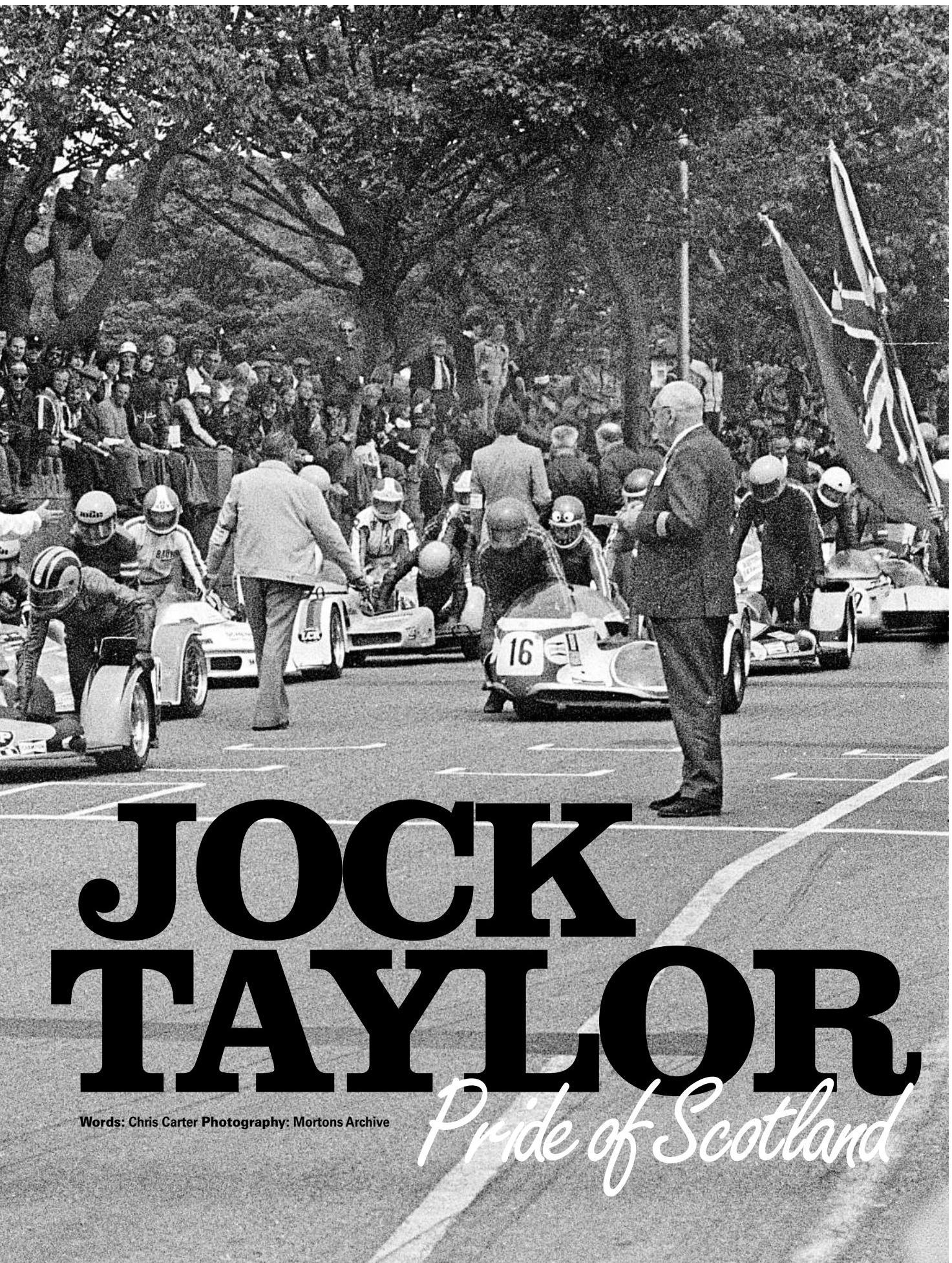
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JOCK TAYLOR

Pride of Scotland

Words: Chris Carter Photography: Mortons Archive



Scotland has only had two road racing world champions, Fergus Kenrick Anderson and John Robert Taylor, better known as Jock Taylor. Both were later killed taking part in the sport they loved. **Chris Carter** takes up the story.

Fergus Anderson won the solo 350cc world title in both 1953 and 54, riding a factory Moto Guzzi. He lost his life at an international meeting at Floreffe, Belgium, in May 1956 at the age of 47. Jock Taylor took the sidecar world championship in 1980, with Swede, Bengt-Goran Johansson, as his passenger. Two years later Jock was fatally injured at the Finnish GP at Imatra in August, 1982.

Jock's sidecar career started as a passenger, not a driver. Scottish sidecar competitor Kenny Andrews, who was born in Smethwick, but who moved north of the border when very young, was in the Goblin Hawe, a pub in Haddington, East Lothian, near Taylor's home, having a drink with his wife one Saturday night in early 1974.

Jock and some friends, including Charlie Swanson, later to be Jock's mechanic, were also there. Possibly fuelled by alcohol, Jock was heard to declare that racing a sidecar outfit was easy! Andrews, aged 27, suggested if Jock thought that was the case, then he should be at the East Fortune circuit early the following morning for a practice day. There were two big shocks the following day.

The first was that Taylor turned up! The second was that he immediately turned out to be a top class passenger. Using an ex-Mac Hobson Windrick BSA chassis, bought by Taylor, fitted with a Triumph 650 engine and gearbox, owned by Andrews, the pair agreed to start racing at the beginning of the 1974 season.

In the close season Lewis Ward offered to be his passenger and buy a BSA engine. Obtaining an engine was no easy task. They caught a train from Edinburgh to London, met up with Alastair Ward, Lewis's brother, who drove them in his car to Newmarket to have a look at Alex Harper's A70 engined outfit. Taylor rode the outfit round a housing estate, and agreed to buy it for £230. They removed the engine and exhaust system, drove back to London, put them in the guards' van and returned to Scotland.

Taylor and Ward's first race was at Silloth. They finished second to Colin Jacobs in the heat and fourth in the final. They spent the season battling with Alastair Lewis and Jimmy Law. At the last meeting of the 1975 season at East Fortune the engine blew up so the pair sold the outfit.

In the close season they bought a second-hand Hartwell Imp engine and Norton gearbox to go into a new chassis from John Crick. Unfortunately, just before Christmas, Jock had a road accident breaking his right leg in three places. Jock was not able to go to the Melville Club's dinner and presentation of awards so he was presented his silverware at the hospital.

Doctors told Taylor he would not be fit to race in 1976. Not surprisingly Jock had other ideas. Ward and the mechanic, Charlie Swanson, built the Imp outfit while Jock was laid up. At first the kneeling tray had to be pivoted out to 45°, but as the season went on the tray was gradually moved back, until his leg was straight.

The Imp outfit was sold to Dave Mallon at the end of the 1976 season and Taylor and Ward looked for a two-stroke. They looked at the flat-four Kohler engine at the Road Racing Show, but while they were considering that, an Ireson TZ750, owned by Spike Hughes and raced by Dave Lawrence came up for sale.

They drove down to Chippenham, Wiltshire, rode the outfit round an industrial estate and with loans bought it for £2700. Ward's parents purchased the

spares for £300. Scottish solo champion Jock Findlay showed the pair how to strip down and rebuild the engine ready for the start of the 1977 season. With the outfit rebuilt and resprayed, the late Robbie Allan offered them a free stand at the Scottish Motor Cycle Show.

Jock roped in some glamorous girls he knew, gave them tight-fitting Taylor/Ward T-shirts and had them out and about selling T-shirts, stickers and posters. At the end of the show there was still some merchandise left, so the tallest girl, Syl, offered a free kiss with any purchase and quickly sold out!

Their season opener was at Croft and they won all their races. Then it was down for the Easter Transatlantic meetings in England. With help from commentator Fred Clarke they obtained entries at Brands and Oulton, but the organiser at Mallory said he had never heard of them and said no.

They set off in a Ford Transit van, supplied by one of their sponsor, Jimmy Mitchell, towing the outfit on a trailer, with Jimmy's son, Richard, following by car. The team finally arrived at Brands after their practice session was over. They and two other teams were given three laps before the first race. Taylor qualified mid field, but made a great start, grabbing third place behind George O'Dell and staying there to the chequered flag. They were lying third at Oulton when the fuel pump failed.

Spike Hughes was so pleased, he offered to pay the entry fees for the season and all expenses to race at the three club meetings at his local track.

Jock was getting quicker and quicker, equalling the solo lap record at East Fortune, held at that time by the late Jock Findlay. From there the pair went to the Ulster GP. The engine flooded at the start and they were last away. They charged quickly through the pack, but were forced to stop when red flags came out immediately after a fatal accident. Astonishingly the flags were then pulled in and they were told they could rejoin the race!

They crossed the line in fourth place after breaking the lap record and becoming the first sidecar crew to lap Dundrod at over 100mph. The organisers accepted that it had been an unusual race and that though they had finished fourth, they paid them third place prize money.

The team then raced at Scarborough, Cadwell and then Oulton, where they beat George O'Dell to win their first international event. Next was Mallory, the penultimate round of the British championship. They had tried to borrow a Yamaha 750, fearing all their rivals had all upgraded to the bigger engine. They were let down and could only finish sixth. Then Dennis Trollope stepped in to sell them a 750 top end, for which they did not have to pay until Christmas.

Final round of the series at Brands carried double points and the organisers agreed to the competitors' request to make it 15 laps rather than 12. Bill Hodgkins, Jock's main rival for the British title, led from the start, with Jock breathing down his neck. Unfortunately, after 12 laps, a marshal jumped out to usher Bill and Jock off the track. He was nearly run down. Nobody had told him it was a 15 lap race. At the end of that lap the chequered flag went out and the result declared after 12 laps, giving Hodgkins the win and the British title.

All in all it was not a bad season with the pair winning the Scottish championship, runner-up spot in the British series and third place in the *Motor Cycle Weekly International* championship.

Left: Thanks to the support of Dennis Trollope Jock Taylor got to live the TT dream with experienced Kenny Arthur in the chair.

Below: The youthful duo of Jock Taylor and Lewis Ward regularly made the long trek south to take on the best English sidecar men.

"WITH THE OUTFIT REBUILT AND RESPRAYED THE LATE ROBBIE ALLAN OFFERED THEM A FREE STAND AT THE SCOTTISH MOTOR CYCLE SHOW."





DENNIS TO THE RESCUE

Jock, Lewis and mechanic Charlie travelled down to London in January 1978, in the search of much needed sponsorship and to collect second place behind solo racer Kevin Wrettom in the annual, prestigious, Grovewood awards. But despite their best efforts at the Road Racing Show they found no new sponsors.

Suddenly, though, Castrol and Centurion Helmets came along with offers of sponsorship. Another offer of help came from Ray Hamilton of Ham-Yam Racing in Chester-le-Street. Ray offered them a new Dieter Busch outfit, complete with 500cc engine. Sadly the deal came with too many conditions. It was more like a business arrangement, rather than sponsorship. They felt it would have cost them too much, so they turned it down.

Dennis Trollope came to their rescue. He had heard about the hunt for sponsorship, but because of all the names on the outfit's fairing he thought they had enough backing! Jock, Lewis and Charlie drove down to Bristol to talk with Dennis and wife Ann.

To everyone's astonishment Dennis went behind the counter and handed over a whole load of engine parts, including a complete 500 top-end, four 250 exhaust pipes, a spare ignition kit and a mind blowing selection of engine parts. Dennis also loaned them a TZ750F exhaust pipe, a device that produced the most bhp. There were no hidden clauses in this deal. Jock and Lewis kept all the sponsorship and prize money.

The team made a lot of modifications to the outfit for the 1978 season, including a new wheel arch, incorporating the radiator. The fuel tank was increased in size to last the TT and GPs. Yamaha mechanic Iain McKay recommended that they bored out the carbs to 35.5mm and supplied them with phosphor-

bronze water and oil pumps. Bill Simpson helped with a lot of the work.

They turned Dennis Trollope's engine into a 500 and the outfit was painted in Castrol colours. They were ready for the new season, GPs and all. The season started with the Transatlantic Match races over the Easter weekend.

Jock and Lewis used the 750 engine and started with second place to the new world champion, George O'Dell, at Brands Hatch on Good Friday. At Mallory, on Easter Sunday, they were second again, this time behind Brian Webb. The following day the pair were battling for the lead at Oulton Park, when a fairing bracket broke and they were black-flagged.

Thanks to Lewis Ward's auntie and his granny donating their savings, they hired a very small, four-berth caravan for four weeks. The day before setting off for Europe they went to Knockhill for a test and discovered there were problems with delivery of fuel to the carbs. Just before leaving, Tom Kinnaird, then the owner of the Knockhill circuit, came over for a chat. Hearing that they were off to the GPs he pulled out his wallet and handed over £80, all the cash in it.

With the van fully loaded and the caravan attached Jock, Lewis, Charlie and Lewis's dad, Harry, as head cook and bottle washer, set off for Austria. Jock, still working as a mechanic servicing East Lothian Council's 70 lawn mowers, had been given eight weeks' holiday by the authority, in return for distributing thousands of leaflets promoting Scottish tourism.

Driving through Germany the van went on to three cylinders after an exhaust valve melted. They struggled on to Austria and then the fuel pump packed up. They stopped at a garage and fixed the pump and travelled on to the Salzburgring. They parked next to Frenchman Alain Michel and his

British passenger, Stu Collins. Come the race there was a problem with the engine overheating and they finished 12th.

After Austria they called at Hermann Schmid's workshop just outside Geneva in Switzerland and replaced the cooling system with the old one. Next was the French GP at Nogaro, where they finished seventh, despite being lapped. Round three was at Mugello, Italy. They were eighth home. It was then back home to Scotland, via Terry Windle's workshop near Sheffield.

He showed them a new chassis made from folded sheet steel. It had been ordered by George O'Dell, but Terry wanted Jock to have it instead. The new outfit was left to be completed and the team set off for home. Back in Scotland, Lewis called a team meeting for the following night, where he announced he was quitting.

The team's strong, tight-working bond had started to change at the GPs. Lewis had stopped enjoying it all so he had decided to pack it in. It was agreed that when the new Windle outfit was up and running, the old outfit would be sold and the proceeds split between Jock and Lewis.

Looking back, Lewis believes that it was the biggest favour he ever did for Jock, because he had to look for a new passenger, particularly for the upcoming TT and that led to him having Kenny Arthur to race with in the Isle of Man.

As a replacement passenger Jock asked another young Scot, 17-year-old James Neill, from nearby Haddington, to take over. The previous season James had been a passenger for a local club racer. Sadly the pair had not finished a single one of the half dozen meetings contested. James, who was working in his father's company as an apprentice plasterer, made his debut with Jock at the Cadwell Park International in May where the pair finished seventh.

TT CHALLENGE

It was agreed that the TT was too much to ask of the teenager, so Jock approached Kenny Arthur. Kenny, a 33-year-old Liverpudlian, was a very experienced TT passenger going back to Charlie Freeman in 1968. He had ridden to victory with George O'Dell in 1977 and had been in the chair with Bill Currie in 1975 and Bill Crook in 76.

At first he told Jock that he was going to the TT for a holiday and would not race with him, believing him to be too young and inexperienced for the event. Jock asked him again and this time Kenny relented. They had no practice prior to arriving in the Island.

Kenny worked out a signalling system to assist Jock, for instance not leaning out of the chair if the next corner was quicker than it looked. Jock treated the event seriously, putting in 36 laps on a road bike before the start of activities. They swiftly turned into a good team, qualifying second fastest in practice, just over five seconds slower than pole setters, Rolf Biland and Kenny Williams.

Monday's three-lap race was won by Dick Greasley and Gordon Russell, after Biland and Williams had gone out on the last lap at Alpine Cottage, with a broken chain. Taylor and Arthur were sixth on lap one, fourth on lap two and finally second, just over 20 seconds behind the winners, after running short of fuel on the Mountain on the last lap.

Two days later Jock and Kenny were third home in the second sidecar leg, run in wet conditions after a long delay, giving them overall victory in the event. The winner was Rolf Steinhausen, with Wolfgang Kalauch in the chair.

It was Steinhausen's third TT victory in four years. Jock led on the first lap, nearly 13 seconds ahead of Steinhausen. But a spin at Braddan Bridge on lap two, almost ended with the Scot nearly running backwards into the wall.

Jock's request for an entry at the Dutch TT was turned down, so next was the Belgian GP, where they qualified outside of the top 10. They discovered that the front tyre was too wide, so they borrowed a smaller Dunlop and that worked perfectly on the new, wide Windle outfit. They finished sixth in the race, picking up five championship points. At the British GP at Silverstone they were fifth quickest in practice and went on to be third home, adding another 10 points to their season's tally.

From there they went to the Ulster Grand Prix. In second place on the last lap a gearbox problem caused them to spin at the hairpin, then approaching the start and finish line, a brand new TZ750 engine destroyed itself, putting them out.

After that it was off to the Nurburgring for the German GP. They qualified fourth fastest, despite problems with the carburettors. During practice Jock went for a walk and came back with a set of Lectron carbs, given to him, he explained, by his new friend, Kenny Roberts. On the warm-up lap an expansion chamber fell off, forcing them into the pits. The race started and everyone had gone when Jock got out onto the track.

In a foul mood, swearing at James, Jock set off after the pack. He picked off the opposition one by one. He was up to sixth, with the front runners in sight, when the chequered flag went out. Another lap, they might have won.

The Czech GP wrapped up the world championship. The Brno race did not add any points to the season's tally. A succession of broken chains was followed by a crash when they were in the top half dozen.

Heading to Holland, James was in the caravan his parents had let them have, trying to grab some sleep. Jock and Peter, the mechanic, were in the van. Suddenly James started to feel the caravan swaying and smell burning rubber. He had no way of warning the others. He lay on the floor, cowering and waiting for the caravan to overturn and him to die! The contents of the cupboards and fridge began to fall out. There was flour, rice, milk, eggs and tinned stuff all over. A can of beans hit him on the head and there was blood everywhere. It was a nightmare. Then Jock pulled to the side of the road, got out and opened the door. He surveyed the chaos. "What are you doing? Making a f*****g cake?"

Left: Tackling tricky Manx conditions; Taylor was grateful for Arthur's knowledge and experience.

Below: The ultimate three-wheel dream team, Jock Taylor and Benga

"TAYLOR RODE THE OUTFIT ROUND A HOUSING ESTATE, AND AGREED TO BUY IT FOR £230."



HARD WORK AT HOME

Back in England it was the British championship rounds. At Oliver's Mount, Scarborough a spin, after hitting water, put them out. They won at Donington after a great battle with Michel, outbraking him on the last lap. At Mallory Park, they were going well, until a breather pipe came off, spraying oil all over James and the chair. At one stage Jock had to grab him and pull him back into the chair. Michel won, with Jock second. After the race James collapsed and needed treatment.

They ended the season at Brands Hatch. James was struggling with a bad case of flu, but Jock still won the race, beating Michel and finishing second in the British championship.

In the winter long-time mechanic, Charlie Swanson, left the team and was replaced by Peter Brown. Sadly, Charlie, who went briefly to work for Alain Michel in France, but was due to return to Jock's team, was killed in a road accident riding a motorcycle just a mile from East Fortune on June 23, 1979.

The 1979 season started well, but quickly went downhill. They won at Donington, using the old Windle outfit. Then James broke his wrist at Brands Hatch on Good Friday after Jock spun the new £8500 Seymaz built by Eric Vanier. Three days later stand-in passenger, Dave Powell, was killed in a crash during practice at Oulton Park on Easter Monday. The new outfit was a write-off.

New mechanic Peter Brown had to work long and hard to get the 1978 Windle outfit ready for the Austrian GP. With James still injured, Jimmy Law was drafted in for the Salzburgring race. Unfortunately they failed to finish when the rear hub broke up. Law was in the chair for the German GP at Hockenheim, but again, when lying fifth, the engine broke again.

Jock was unable to have Kenny Arthur with him again for the 1979 TT, because he was contracted for the whole season, in the GPs and the Isle of Man, with the German, Rolf

Steinhausen. Instead Jock persuaded another, highly experienced British passenger, Gordon Russell, a TT winner, to step into the chair. They had problems throughout practice with the carburettors, wrecking two engines. Despite that they were fifth fastest in practice.

A misfire plagued them on the opening lap of the first race and Jock stopped to change spark plugs. On the way to Quarter Bridge the misfire continued and they pulled off. For the rest of the race a large Scottish contingent plied them both with Pernod. Things were not much better in race two, where they finished down in 16th place. Gordon was passenger for the Post TT meeting at Mallory Park where they finished second to Dick Greasley.

**"TO EVERYONE'S
ASTONISHMENT DENNIS
WENT BEHIND THE COUNTER
AND HANDED OVER A
WHOLE LOAD OF ENGINE
PARTS, INCLUDING A
COMPLETE 500 TOP-END."**

For the Dutch TT, James Neil was back in action. They finished third. Eight days later the engine seized up on the warm up lap at the Belgian GP.

Back in Britain the pair took victory at an international meeting at Donington Park. Afterwards James Neil told Jock he was quitting. The events of the past 12 months had had a major effect on Neil's confidence. Putting not too fine a point on it, James believed if he carried on, he would die and he was too young for that.

The previous season, at the Nurburging I had introduced Jock to a 20-year-old Swedish 125cc racer, Bengt-Goran Johansson. They became friends. Jock first asked Jimmy Law to crew for him. He could not, because of family commitments, so Jock then approached the Swede.

Benga, as he was known, had been racing in the 125cc world championship on a Morbidelli since the start of 1977. His last ride on the little Italian machine was at Cadwell in an International meeting in May, where he made his debut as a passenger with Jock.

The Swedish GP at Karlskoga in August marked Benga's debut as a GP passenger after just two race meetings. They won! There was no sidecar race in Finland, so the next race was the British GP at Silverstone. Biland was the winner, with Jock second. The Czech GP wrapped up the new B2A world championship, but Jock crashed out when running in the top five. Biland and Waltisperg were world champions, notching up 67 points in the seven rounds. Jock and Benga were sixth, on 43.

Jock and Benga started the 1980 season with victory at the Paul Ricard circuit in the French GP, ahead of Biland. From there they travelled on to the Yugoslavian GP at Rieka, grabbing third place behind Biland and Michel.

Back in the UK, Benga Johansson made his Isle of Man TT debut. Despite the Swede's lack of experience on the Island, the pair qualified well and went on to take second place in race one. With the track drying out, they cut a 30 second deficit to just six seconds behind winners Trevor Ireson and Clive Pollington, setting the fastest lap at 100.64mph on the third and final lap, the only 100mph plus lap of the race.

Jock secured his first-ever TT victory in race two, breaking the record from a standing start, until Benga spotted a broken radiator bracket and they had to slow. In the closing stages Benga had to pump the fuel. On the last lap they ran short of fuel eight miles from home. Just 200 yards from home, they ran out of fuel completely. Despite all that they had set the fastest lap at 106.09mph, beating Rolf Biland's old record by 18 seconds. Their winning margin over Trevor Ireson was a comfortable 65 seconds.

Victory at Assen, where Biland retired, lifted Jock into the World Championship lead, Michel was second home and Derek 'Crazy Horse' Jones and Brian Ayres third, after qualifying on pole. Mechanic Pete Novac fitted a new, power-valve TZ500 Yamaha motor for the race, one that had been used by Graham Wood on his solo machine and rebuilt by Dennis Trollope.

At Zolder, in the Belgian GP, Jock won again, followed home by Michel and Biland. Jock and Benga had eventful practice sessions. The first incident when they went straight on at the chicane, the second when the sidecar wheel sheared leaving the outfit spinning in the middle of the road, finally the engine nipped up in the final session. The team worked till after midnight changing the crankshafts.

Jock took victory at Imatra, taking the maximum 15 points, with Biland fourth home,

giving the Scot a 19 point lead. Using a new, wider Windle chassis, Jock and Benga clinched the sidecar world title by finishing second to Jones and Ayres at the British GP at Silverstone. They were lucky to finish. A slow puncture left the rear tyre in shreds at the end of the race, on top of which Jock was suffering from chicken pox!

It was the first time since George O'Dell's success in 1977 that a British driver had taken the crown. Biland failed to finish and with only two rounds to go, Jock could not now be caught. The pair ended the GP season on a high note winning at the Nürburgring.

At that point the team had had 23 starts, winning 15 international events, including four GPs, four seconds, two thirds, a fourth and just one retirement. Success in the end-of-season British Championship rounds earned them the title and they also notched up the first ever 100mph sidecar lap at Mallory Park. To cap a great year Jock was voted the MCN Man of the Year.

Victory in the Austrian GP ahead of Biland started the 1981 season well. Michel was victorious at Hockenheim, with Jock second and Biland retiring. Biland bounced back with victory at Paul Ricard, with Taylor second and Michel third. Engine problems ended with Jock only 14th in the Spanish GP. Biland was the winner, ahead of Michel. Jock and Benga broke race and lap records as they notched a double win in the 1981 TT. Benga's memories, though, are not of the successes, but from being battered black and blue from new plastic cones on the Mountain section.

Taylor and Michel had another fairing-bashing race at the Dutch TT. Michel narrowly won, with Jock second and Biland third. With five rounds to go Michel was on 62 points, Jock 53 and Biland 52. Biland took victory at Spa, with Taylor second and Michel third. Jock's hopes of retaining the title took a knock at Silverstone when the gear-shifter broke putting him out. Biland won again, from Michel. Jock blew up

three engines at the Finnish GP but still finished second in the race to Biland.

Taylor was third at Anderstorp, with Biland winning again, chased home by Michel. Jock's Brno curse struck again. He failed to finish the race. Biland made it five wins in succession to win the title on a massive total of 127 points. Michel was runner-up on 106 and Jock third with 87.

Back home in Britain Jock and Benga won the British championship again. Life, as usual was busy, but Jock found time to marry his girlfriend, Kate at the end of the year.

Jock Taylor and Gordon Russell, TT 1979.





A SAD END

The 1982 season started badly with the news that Dennis Trollope was facing a massive cutback to his racing budget. He would probably only be able to run Jock in the UK. In the end the money came in and Dennis carried on tuning the motors with Fowlers of Bristol the main sponsor. First race was the Austrian GP, where Biland was the winner and Jock fourth.

The 1982 TT was one of mixed fortunes, starting as favourites; they hit major problems on the opening lap of race one, eventually finishing down in 18th place. Jock and Benga made up for their disappointment in the second race by taking the chequered flag ahead of husband and wife team Dennis and Julia Bingham, setting a new lap record at 108.29mph in the process.

Biland won at the Dutch TT with Jock and Benga sixth over the line. At Spa, using the new Windle outfit, they were third home, with Biland again the winner. They had to retire with engine problems at Silverstone, where Dutchman Egbert Streuer was the winner. The team finished second to Biland at Anderstorp. After five rounds, with four to go, they were now joint third on 33 points. Biland led on 60, with Schwarzel second on 52.

Jock Taylor lost his life in the Finnish GP on August 15. He was dicing for third place in the very wet conditions with Biland and Waltisperg on the fourth lap. In deep lying water the outfit spun and smashed into a trackside telegraph pole.

THEN JAMES BROKE HIS WRIST AT BRANDS HATCH ON GOOD FRIDAY AFTER JOCK SPUN THE NEW £8500 SEYMAZ.

Benga was thrown clear and uninjured, but while the marshals and first aid workers tried to give assistance to Jock and release him from the mangled outfit, three laps later Finn, Pentti Niinivaara and fellow countryman, Vesa Bienek, also spun and ploughed into the wreckage.

Jock was rushed to hospital at nearby Lappeenranta with head injuries, suspected

broken legs and internal injuries. He died at 7.30pm that evening.

Jock, who was the sidecar class representative at the time, had rejected appeals by both Rolf Biland and Werner Schwarzel, asking for the race to be called off. Jock and Alain Michel were both happy to race, despite the torrential rain which turned the track into a river.

After the race Benga was deeply shocked and upset and unsure of what he should do in the future. He had offers from both Biland and Michel to become their passenger. He considered both requests, but realised he had had a very lucky escape and it was time to quit.

He travelled to Donington Park, where the team had been based and started working for the circuit.

Taylor and Johansson, proudly carrying the World Championship number 1 on the Fowler Yamaha.

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HONDA NSR500 RACER TEST

Words: Alan Cathcart **Photography:** Hidenobu Takeuchi and Clive Challinor

First and foremost

I guess I have Wayne Gardner to thank for beginning a 30 year career of track testing Honda's latest and greatest Grand Prix hardware, writes **Alan Cathcart**.





There is only one remaining example of the NSR500 V4, with which Freddie Spencer regained the 500cc World Championship in 1985.

Wayne Gardner did a premature crushing job on the second Freddie Spencer bike in the last race of the '85 Swann Series, the day before I was due to test it at Surfers Paradise.

But for that I'd probably not have been invited to Japan to ride the bike on which Freddie achieved a unique feat by becoming the only rider to win both the 250 and 500cc World Championships in a single season, exactly 30 years ago this year.

I can't deny feeling more than the usual sense of trepidation as I waited on a spring-like January day in the pits at the Honda owned Suzuka circuit for factory test rider Koide to complete his two laps scrubbing in new tyres for me. I'd ridden a few factory 500GP bikes before, but this one was somehow different.

From the first time I watched Freddie on it at Daytona, streaking out of the chicane with the NSR shaking as he zapped round the speed bowl eating TZ750s for lunch, I knew that this was something different. I'd coped with Eddie Lawson's OW81 Yamaha quite nicely, but the new Honda V4 had proved to be in a different class.

Fifteen minutes later I was back in the pits with no doubt in my mind; Freddie Spencer was supernatural. How he could ride the NSR500 with apparent nonchalance, in sunshine and rain,

defied imagination. It wasn't as if Honda had produced a latter-day version of Mike Hailwood's 1967 RC181, a bike whose chassis proved woefully inadequate, it's just that by the standards of the era the NSR500 was so much motorcycle. How else to categorise a machine that weighed just 120kg, yet produced close on 145bhp; that accelerated like a cruise missile, yet stopped and steered on a sixpence; that popped a wheelie at the slightest provocation, yet pulled smoothly from as low as 7000rpm up to its peak of around 12,000 revs.

Feeding in the clutch I could amble at walking pace down Suzuka's pit lane with the engine pulling as low as 7000rpm. Its quadruple ATAC exhaust valves and high tech reed valve design really paid off in terms of flexibility. But then as I accelerated out onto the track, suddenly everything became compressed into fractions of its natural time. What had happened was that the tacho needle had hit 9500rpm, and suddenly the engine had taken off into the super-power band where Freddie liked to operate all the time.

I'm back in after five laps to catch my breath. The NSR500 is a fearsome machine, far more difficult to ride than the Yamaha, precisely because it felt so much more powerful; yet Honda had done a really good job of harnessing its vast horsepower for 1985 in a light bike that still handled well. The Nissin brakes were superb, as I found the very first lap when I arrived at the idiotic Suzuka chicane.

"FIFTEEN MINUTES LATER I WAS BACK IN THE PITS WITH NO DOUBT IN MY MIND; FREDDIE SPENCER WAS SUPERNATURAL."



One of the advantages of being the last man to ride this particular world championship winning bike was that I had twice as long aboard it as I could usually hope for on a factory racer. That was good, given the NSR's daunting first impression, and by the end of 30 laps or so I had begun to make friends with the beast. From wondering, at first, how on earth I was going to cut some respectable lap times and stay in one piece, by the end I was looking for ways to use the V4 motor's power and torque to my advantage.

For example in the winding uphill section behind the pits, where to start with I was using second gear and lots of revs, I realised that the power delivery wasn't nearly as fierce as it seemed at first. It was just that there was so much horsepower; I imagined a step in the powerband which wasn't there. It was better to take it in third, backing on and off the throttle as I climbed the hill, which settled the bike better.

This illustrated perfectly the difference between the NSR500 V4 and its NS500 three-cylinder predecessor, which I'd tested. On the triple – the



Rothmans-sponsored Honda Britain bike on which Wayne Gardener had made his debut season as a GP regular in 1985, I had to keep it revving hard, and to begin with I was making the mistake of trying to ride the NSR the same way. Fast Freddie's tuner, Erv Kanemoto, expressed it best: "Honda's approach is to make the power first, then they try and fill in the weak points," he said. "Then if you have to give away a bit of top speed to improve the powerband, it's easier to go backwards. But it does make the NSR V4 a little difficult to ride to its maximum. That may be a bit mild. Let's say that it becomes REAL difficult."

Built with one rider in mind; the NSR500 and Freddie Spencer proved the dream team of 1985.



MASSIVE WHEELIES

One thing that took a lot of mastering was the front wheel's insistence on pulling massive wheelies accelerating out of slow corners. In the end I resigned myself to having to live with being an imitation of Freddie – rather a pale one I admit. That was before I thought I'd try coming out of the last corner before the back straight at 5000rpm with the throttle pinned open to see where the power came in. That obviously involved having my eye on the tacho, and not really watching the road. So when we hit about 9000 the front wheel suddenly aimed for the stars, and it was only a fluke I didn't end up on the grass.

I really did have to learn to live with the front wheel of the NSR500 spending a lot of time in the air; there was just so much raw power that I simply had to get used to it. The one-up, left foot change was good, apart from a notchy bottom gear, the clutch was light and the radial Michelin ace. Plus the riding position was great, with Freddie practically the same height as me, although I found the rear suspension compliance a bit too hard for

me. One really good feature was the bike's handling under heavy braking, for in spite of having both TRAC units operational and with a 16in front wheel, there was very little trace of understeer and absolutely no tuck-in of the front wheel.

The 1985 World Champion Honda NSR500 was not as delicate in handling or as responsive in engine pick-up as the OW81 Yamaha, but it unquestionably felt more powerful, braked a little better, but in my opinion, was a much more difficult bike to get the best out of. What a tragedy his brilliant career got truncated thanks to the dreaded tendonitis that manifested itself in 1986. Freddie's duo of world titles in the same season will forever mark him out as a legend in his lifetime.



Right: Tester Cathcart had to get used to the front wheel being in the air on the 500.

TECHSPEAK WITH OGUMA – THE TRUTH ABOUT THE NSR500

Honda's reputation for secrecy is well-founded, and has been pursued down the ages with a sometimes fanatical zeal. As Erv Kanemoto once said in an interview, nobody knows the extent of their rivals' knowledge, so that what might seem an insignificant piece of trivia could be the last component in a jigsaw puzzle of data.

This makes it a frustrating task trying to find the inner secrets of a factory GP racer from its creators; a fact which occasionally leads some members of the media to make more or less inspired guesses about technical data which miraculously become transferred into fact. However, when it comes to the NSR500 Honda I got lucky.

The day I rode the bike, along with the NSR250 featured in the last issue, HRC Director Yoichi Oguma, the man responsible for the development of both machines in 1985, led me off to the HRC office. There, sipping cups of green tea in front of a

glass cabinet containing one of the jewel-like 50cc twin-cylinder race engines from the 1960s as well as a 250 six, I was privileged to be told what, according to Mr Oguma, are the true facts about the design of these bikes.

Six NSR500s were constructed for the 1985 season, two for Freddie Spencer, the others for testing or Japanese title use, with both Randy Mamola and Wayne Gardner riding them occasionally. The V4 engine was a developed version of the single-crank 90° power unit which debuted at Daytona in 1984. What was the bore and stroke, I wondered? Mr Oguma smiled broadly: "Normally impossible to explain about inside engine, but you come all the way to Japan, so big honour to know! The cylinders measure 54 x 54.5mm. We would have preferred to use over square engine with shorter stroke, but if we use 56 x 50.6mm cylinders, the engine becomes too

wide. We tried many different engine configurations – 55, 53, even 52mm bore, but the results were not good. We decided on 54 x 54.5mm as the best compromise.

"Once we choose the bore and stroke, we rely on materials and design to achieve the same results as with a more desirable over square engine. In fact, we rev the engine to 13,000 on our dyno, but only for test purposes. Freddie says he normally uses 11,400-11,600rpm which is better for reliability. We design engine to be safe at higher revs, but he says he doesn't need them."

"THE NSR500 IS A FEARSOME MACHINE, FAR MORE DIFFICULT TO RIDE THAN THE YAMAHA, PRECISELY BECAUSE IT FELT SO MUCH MORE POWERFUL."

What about peak horsepower, though? Again a big smile from Oguma-san: "This not usually discussed either, but I make you big privilege. We get maximum horsepower of over 143bhp at between 11,000-11,500rpm – depends on engine. Some engines have even given us over 144bhp on the test bed – each one is slightly different from the other."

Both the 250 twin and 500 four-cylinder NSRs had the same overall width of 600mm, achieved by the use of the longer stroke engine design. This was dictated by the decision to build a true V4, with one single crankshaft, rather than a twin-crank engine. Why go for the inherently wider single





crank, I asked Mr Oguma? "There are many reasons, but the main one is to reduce friction, which wastes horsepower. The Yamaha has more frictional losses absorbed within the engine, because it has eight main bearings: the NSR500 has only five."

Presumably the 90° included cylinder angle was arrived at in the interests of reducing vibration, as was the case with the first V4 Paton design of almost 10 years ago. "Balancing of vibration is correct, but also Paton carburetors feed into cylinders, whereas ours go into crankcase, so necessary different design. We have carburetors specially made for us, but this is not possible for Paton, so maybe space is a problem for him. But Mr Pattoni is a very clever man: only perhaps he does not have same facilities that we do!"

In order to increase the size of the reed valve inlet ports within the available crankcase area, Honda had turned the boxes in which the reeds were mounted through 90°, so they were wider from top to bottom than across. In turn, this brought the carburetors closer together, making the construction of special magnesium twin-choke Keihin carbs desirable, though to be strictly accurate they consisted of two separate conventional carbs cast in pairs, rather than a true car-type twin-choke unit. Two sizes of carb were used during the season, depending on the circuit:

35mm units for faster circuits like Silverstone, Paul Ricard or Hockenheim, 34mm ones for the rest, including Suzuka on my test day.

Interestingly, these had cylindrical slides, in contrast to the flat-slide Mikunis used by Yamaha or the otherwise fashionable Lectron: "We believe that a long inlet tract makes a good torque curve with this engine," replied Oguma, "so we use round instead of guillotine slides to extend the inlet. We have experimented with flat slides on the NSR, but we are not satisfied with the results and have not raced with them so far, even though our production racing machines use them."

Given Honda's development abilities, why did they choose to produce a V4 engine in the first place, rather than continue with an improved version of the smaller, lighter V3 NS500? The answer was illuminating: "We could perhaps have produced the same horsepower that we have obtained with the NSR by developing the NS500 more, but already this engine must be revved very high to make strong power. Developing it further would only have made some problems worse."

"Of course we want strong power, but also a wide power band, which V4 design gives us. Also, V3 engine makes strange vibration, which is absent in V4. This affects chassis design, quite apart from causing engine reliability problems and sometimes rider fatigue. With a high vibration level, you must

use thicker material in constructing the chassis, which adds more weight. This is the reason that the NS500 weighs only slightly less than the NSR, in spite of having a lighter engine. By using an inherently smoother V4 design, we were able to use lighter gauge material and so save weight.

"Weight is our big enemy at present, and the use of a V4 meant we do not need a balance shaft in the engine either, to smooth out vibration. To drive the water pump and ignition, we just use a small secondary shaft off the end of the crank, which is smaller and lighter than a full balancer, and has less friction."

The ignition employed on the NSR is a departure from Honda's usual practice, which is to employ a Kokkusan Denki CDI unit. Here for the first time they have joined forces with OKI, one of Japan's leading computer manufacturers, to fit an electronic ignition system, with a miniature computer controlling the advance curve and timing.

Left: Not an inch of wasted space on the NSR500 meant the dimensions were close to that of the 250.



The most radical and obvious difference between the '84 and '85 versions of the NSR500 lies in the chassis design. The original version had an ELF-inspired layout, with the fuel tank beneath the engine, the exhausts curving round above it, and a less than ideal weight distribution. The 1985 title-winner employed a more conventional layout. Oguma-san: "Maintenance was not easy on the '84 bike. Changing a spark plug; looking into the combustion chamber, even altering carburation was a big problem with this machine, because of the layout."

"Before the season began our mechanics – Erv-san, George-san, the others – they did not believe it would cause so many difficulties for maintenance, but after the racing began, they had strong complaints about this. Also, second reason is that cooling performance was not so good. Third reason was the rider: Freddie was not completely happy with the machine's handling. So for 1985, we changed to a new version, which of course incorporated many good lessons we learnt with the first type NSR500. Especially we learned the V4 engine was ideal."

For 1985 a more conventional layout was adopted, with the fuel tank in its 'normal' place, though handling was still not perfect, and the new exhausts cracked up badly on the bike's debut at Daytona. But the new twin-spar design, based

loosely on the Kobas format and known officially in HRC as 'Construction A twin-tube Diamond frame', had immeasurably better access for maintenance purposes.

After the first GP at Kyalami the team went testing in Yugoslavia to pinpoint the tendency of the front end to wash out, especially on fast downhill bends. "We cured this by moving the engine forward and steepening the head angle," said Oguma. "This altered the weight distribution, and cured our handling problems. Now the weight is 55/45 frontwards without rider, 53/47 with rider, which is most desirable to make the wheel stick better going into corners."

"Also, with Michelin radial tyre, which is an important reason for our success, we must have a lot of weight on the front wheel to make it work properly, because of tyre profile and construction. This also suits Freddie's riding style, but we also consider rider geometry very important. It is not acceptable as on some European machines to achieve forward weight distribution at the expense of rider comfort. We pay close attention to making the rider feel happy on our bike, so he can ride the whole GP at 100% without fatigue caused by riding position."

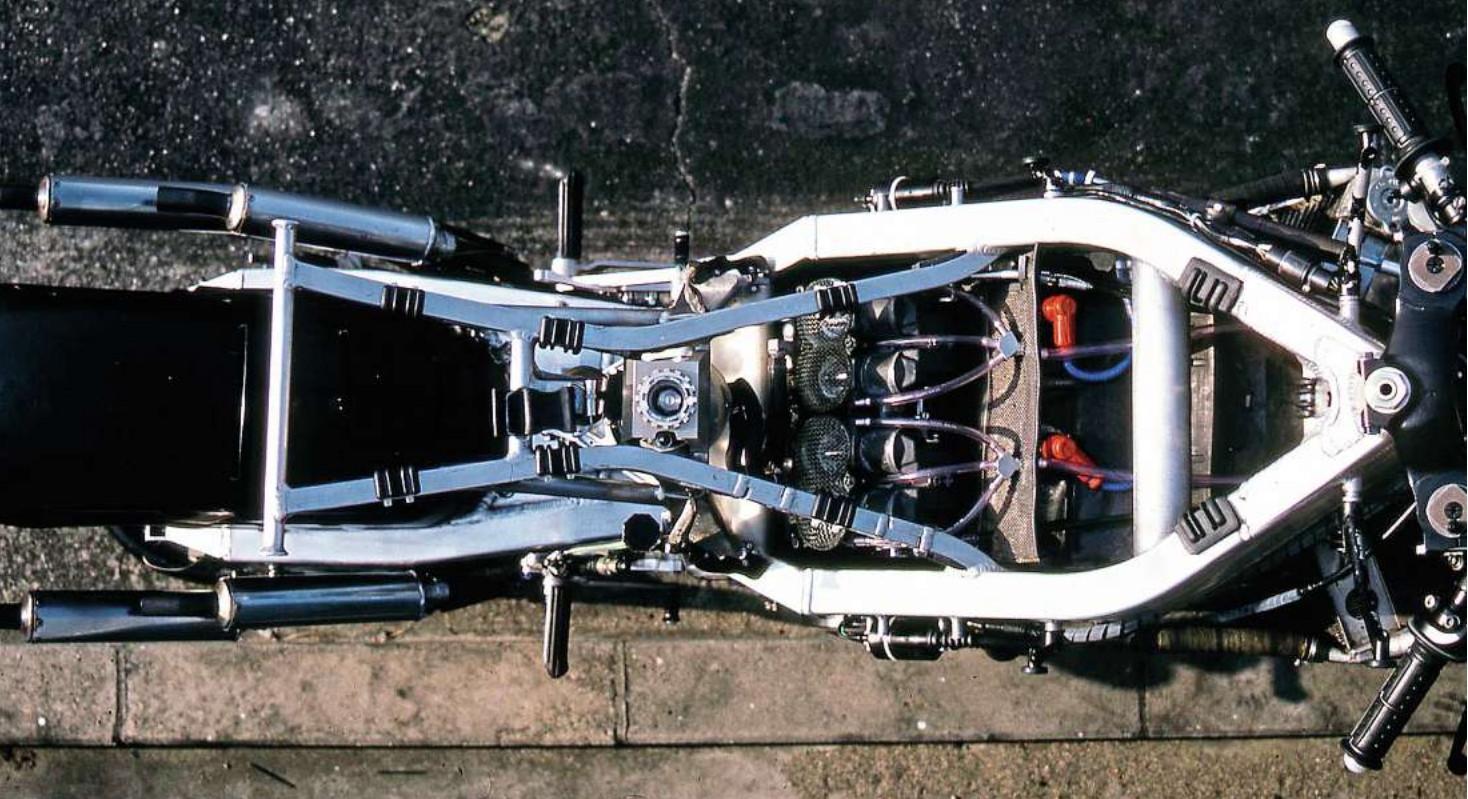
The engine was underslung from the internally stiffened twin-spar chassis, which had a bracing bar across the centre of the frame. The design

was derived from the NSR250, which so impressed Spencer when he tested it for the first time at the end of 1984 that he asked for the 500 to be given a similar chassis. The massive extruded alloy swingarm is suspended by a Showa monoshock mounted Pro-Link style and offering a full rising rate.

The magnesium-bodied shock is adjustable for preload, compression and damping, but not ride height. Had Honda ever considered mounting an adjustable preload control for the rear unit, as fitted to their first, unsuccessful RS250R? "No," said Mr Oguma decisively, "I believe this is just a distraction for the rider. He is quite busy enough during a race without trying to fine-tune the suspension which he will have carefully set up already in practice. If the chance to alter the damping does not exist, the rider will adjust to the changing conditions in any case." But what about compensating for loss of the fuel load? "I still don't think so, because on this NSR500 the weight distribution is the same full or empty – in other words, fuel is located in exact centre of motorcycle. So still not necessary to adjust the rear suspension!"

Front forks were 43mm Showa, as fitted to the RVF750 TT1 bikes, with brake-operated TRAC anti-dive in each leg. The steering head angle could be altered from 24 to 26°. 310mm floating Nissin front brakes with four-pot calipers were fitted, while at

"ONCE WE CHOOSE THE BORE AND STROKE, WE RELY ON MATERIALS AND DESIGN TO ACHIEVE THE SAME RESULTS AS WITH A MORE DESIRABLE OVER SQUARE ENGINE."



the rear either 210 or 240mm discs were used, depending on the circuit. Unlike most modern GP riders, Spencer did use the rear brake sometimes, but only on tracks like Jarama and Anderstorp where there were several tight corners at the end of short squirts. Here he had the 240mm rear disc fitted, a carbon-fibre one which was changed every three meetings, otherwise the 210mm one was used to get it through scrutineering. Carbon fibre being an expensive commodity, I had a steel disc fitted for my ride on the bike!

The words 'carbon fibre' and 'Honda' inevitably recall that confidence-shattering practice crash by Freddie Spencer at Kyalami in 1984, when a rear wheel made in this material appeared to break up. Since then, Honda has stuck to alloy wheels, right? Wrong! "We used carbon fibre wheels on several occasions last season," revealed Mr Oguma, "mainly at fast circuits like Salzburg and Silverstone where there are few slow corners. At about 50% of the circuits, where there are some slow corners, we fit the alloy wheels which have a bigger moment of inertia at the circumference because of their extra weight, which assists with acceleration. Carbon fibre wheels no problem for Honda now. We use all the time."

How much does the NSR500 weigh? Oguma-san smiled: "We say 'under 120kg', but really it is only a little under, so with a 100kg weight limit for

500 class, we must pay great attention to this for the '86 season. Even getting to 110kg will be hard, but we must try." Back then little titanium was used on the bike, though there was quite extensive use of magnesium, and of course the bodywork was carbon fibre. No titanium parts were used in the engine.

Now for the big question; what will it do? "One time at Ricard I saw a maximum speed of 303kph on a speed gun," says Oguma. But that would have been with the '84 bike, for the French GP last season was held at Le Mans. Figure a few extra kph for the improvements wrought to the '85 model, and suddenly you're getting close to the magic 200mph barrier for a 500 GP motorcycle. Was this year's bike faster, I asked Mr Oguma? "Yes!" he declared triumphantly...

Above and left: Only 119kg, with incredible attention to detail, the NSR500 is most definitely 'full factory'!

SPECIFICATION

ENGINE: 90° V4 reed-valve water-cooled single crankshaft two-stroke with mechanically controlled ATAC variable exhaust volume on each cylinder

DIMENSIONS: 54 x 54.5mm

CAPACITY: 499cc

OUTPUT: 144bhp at 11,500rpm

CARBURATION: 2 x twin-choke 34mm Keihin carburetors with cylindrical slide

IGNITION: OKI electronic

CLUTCH: 17-plate dry (eight friction/nine steel)

GEARBOX: Six-speed

CHASSIS: Twin-spar beam frame in reinforced extruded aluminium

WHEELBASE: 1370mm

SUSPENSION: (F) 43mm Showa telescopic forks with TRAC brake-operated hydraulic anti-dive in each leg. (R) Pro-Link monoshock with single Showa unit

BRAKES: (F) 2 x 310mm Nissin discs with four piston calipers. (R) 210mm Nissin disc with two piston caliper

TYRES: (F) 13/60 x 16 Michelin radial slick. (R) 18/67 x 17 Michelin radial slick

WEIGHT: 119kg dry **TOP SPEED:** 305kph

YEAR OF MANUFACTURE: 1985

OWNER: Honda Racing Corporation, Tokyo, Japan

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DOING THE DOUBLE

Freddie Spencer's story

After Freddie Spencer won his first 500cc title in 1983 at 21, making him the youngest person to do so, Honda created the radical NSR500 V4 for the following year. Teething problems and a broken collarbone relegated him to fourth in the championship, despite three race wins. Fast Freddie tells **Alan Cathcart** about the road to his 1985 championship double.

Words: Freddie Spencer – **Photographs:** Alan Cathcart

During that 1983 season, it became clear we were limited on how much further Honda could take the three-cylinder. We'd suspected that the Yamaha would be strong. When Barry Sheene got on it and had them put the engine further back that's what immediately made it handle better.

Unfortunately he got hurt at Silverstone; he would have been tough to beat if that hadn't happened. As the season went on it became obvious Yamaha was catching up on handling, and already had the engine performance advantage.

I heard a little bit about a possibility that there was a (Honda) four in the works. After we won the 500 championship I went to Japan and raced in the All-Japan GP at Suzuka, and won that.

On Monday I heard there was a chance that we were going to see this V4. I was pretty much in disbelief; the fuel tank under the motor, the exhausts over the top of it. Really? OK, that's fine; Honda knows what it's doing.

The first time I rode the bike it didn't really feel much different in handling than a conventional one. I had my attention elsewhere, the main thing I was really focused on was the engine, and I immediately noticed that the power delivery was so much different from the three-cylinder.

On the three the initial pickup was a lot better. But the new V4 took time to get going. However, as soon as the engine picked up, it really, REALLY motored. The characteristics of the three-cylinder motor were almost like a motocross engine, because Miyakoshi-san, who designed it, was used to working on dirtbike motors.

The success of the three-cylinder meant he was put in charge of designing the V4; it was like a thank you for building Honda's first 500cc World Championship-winning motor.

The philosophy behind it was the belief that you had to get the centre of gravity way, way low. So the bike was very flat, but with a very steep steering head angle, which caused problems with wheel clearance under braking, and radiator size.

I usually find the weaknesses in a new bike pretty quickly, so my initial feeling was not so bad. The strength of this design was supposed to be high-speed stability, and through the Esses it felt pretty good.

The initial feeling with the three-cylinder was very responsive, after that it would go flat and then pick up again, but on the V4 it was a little less responsive initially, but then it was more linear in delivery.

"WHEN BARRY SHEENE GOT ON IT AND HAD THEM PUT THE ENGINE FURTHER BACK, THAT'S WHAT IMMEDIATELY MADE IT HANDLE BETTER."



The next issue that came into play was ground clearance and this was also the first time that I'd ever run a radial tyre on the rear. It wasn't till we got to Australia in December and tested for the first time at Surfers Paradise that we found the extra grip meant more lean angle, so now we gotta narrow this thing.

The only way to do that was by making the bottom part narrower, which meant pushing everything else further up as there was now less room to stop the fuel moving around.

Our first race was in the Daytona 200, and it felt pretty good there. But Daytona doesn't really stress anything in the handling department too much. Daytona was the first place we had an exhaust problem – it split after my second fuel stop.

After the Daytona race I had a talk with Jean Hérisse of Michelin and I told him there was something wrong with the tyre he'd put on at that fuel stop - but we checked it, and there wasn't anything wrong with it. But I had felt it, absolutely.

So, then we go to South Africa for the first 500GP race; I go out, do a quick time, put on another wheel, go another half a lap – and something exploded. The last thing I remember is lining up to pass Barry on his Suzuki, and the next thing I know I'm looking at the hay bales.

I get back to the pits and my feet are broken, and so is the wheel. Erv Kanemoto comes up, and he's just pale as a sheet. He says, "You know, that was the wheel we put on at the second fuel stop at Daytona".

And I'd felt there that something wasn't right, but kept on running, finished the race second to Kenny because of the split exhaust – and it's exploded half a lap later 12,000 miles away. Even now I get a shiver thinking of maybe having that crash on the banking at Daytona.

That injury put me out of action for Spain, but then I came back for the Italian GP at Misano, which I won on my comeback. Honda had done nothing with the bike in the meantime except put metal wheels on it.

Then we go to Donington for the Transatlantic Match Races, and with a couple of laps to go I went in a turn just like I had all along, and probably the fuel moved around in a near-empty tank, and I tuck the front end and crash.



But the first indicator we were having some trouble was when we were in Salzburg, high up in the Alps, and we couldn't get that thing to run fast no matter we did.

At Salzburgring it wouldn't even pull sixth gear, so on the last lap Randy Mamola pulls over and lets me through to get second. But I told him on the podium, I appreciate that, but don't do it again. I was getting really grouchy about things.

We had a fuel pump inside the tank, and the fuel pump was pumping air because they didn't have the tank baffled properly. So we go to Germany, and on Friday after the practice session I told Mr

Kanazawa and Mr Oguma that I wanted to ride the three-cylinder again.

All the advantages it was designed to display weren't coming out, plus working on the thing was a problem which cost us the Dutch GP. The plug cap came off and George Vukmanovich couldn't push his hand through the exhausts to get at it – he was getting second-degree burns trying to fix it.

So, now we're in Germany at Hockenheim, and I told Kanazawa and Erv I wanted my three-cylinder back that I'd given to Randy. Turned out the only choice we had was to get Marco Lucchinelli's '83 chassis that was on display in the Honda lobby in Belgium, and so they went there and got it.

The '84 three-cylinder engine wouldn't fit the '83 chassis, but somehow they built the bike up in time for practice the next day. Kanazawa said he knew if they could build the thing that in the end I'd do whatever I needed to win with it – and I did indeed end up winning the German GP.

Then they fly over an improved V4, and so I race that in France and Yugoslavia, and I win both times. For Assen I wanted to use the three-cylinder, but Yamaha must have had its lawyers checking the small print and found something in the regulations which frightened Honda enough to make me ride the V4.

For Belgium the next weekend everything was straightened out, and I switched back to the three-cylinder and averaged more than 100mph to win. Then I broke my collarbone at Silverstone, so I was out for the rest of the year, and the championship was over.



NEW DAWN

Honda always worked on the principle that this year's bike had to be better than last year's. We all decided we're going back to super-conventional for next year and the 250 we'd decided to build showed us how to do that.

Honda already had a production 250 that wasn't really up to much – trying to get a slice of the Yamaha TZ250 market, and it wasn't really a very good attempt.

I remember very clearly the moment that all changed. I was coming into the pits after the problem at Assen – and everything leading up to this event influenced everything that happened from this moment forward.

Everything about the whole year came into that focus at that moment. So we're all in the motorhome afterwards, and I say – guys, we're not going to win the World Championship this year, so let's make up for it by winning two next year.

The last time I'd ridden a 250 was in March 1980 at Daytona, and I didn't win that race – Tony Mang did. My last full season of riding a 250 was in the AMA Championship with Erv when I was 17 years old.

Mr Horike got a clean sheet of paper to design the 250. He was a young engineer, and the only thing he'd done before that was to design the carbon-fibre wheel I crashed on at Kyalami.

What he did then more than made up for that, because in three months he took that 250 from an idea to the NSR250 I tested at Suzuka in September, which was by far the greatest bike I would ever race.

What had to happen to get Mr Horike in a position to design the NSR250 is what really made the NSR500, which has since gone on to become the most successful Grand Prix bike.

So I'm riding that 250, and right away I just loved this thing; I'm going quicker than a 250 has ever been around Suzuka before. But then it rained a little bit, I'm coming into a downhill right turn and I hit a wet spot. I tucked the front and think I'm down – but that 250 goes, 'No, we're not crashing!' and it just picks itself right back up, and resumes normal service.

I said to myself, 'It's the motorcycle that saved me, it wasn't me.' That bike was great from the very beginning; it was completely different from any other Honda GP bike I've ever ridden, different from the three-cylinder and definitely different to the V4.

The difference was in the 250's overall feel, its overall friendliness – it was so well balanced. I always wanted to race bikes that had this forgivingness factor.

I always believed our goal was to push, push, push, push beyond what was possible, and then the bike tells you – oops, hey, that's enough, and that's when you've got. It was one of the most seminal moments I have ever experienced on a motorcycle. I said, OK, this is the starting point for the 500 – let's make a doubled-up version.

Even so we went to Australia in December with the old upside-down '84 V4 still trying to figure out if putting weight at the top would fix it. I never saw the conventional NSR500 until Daytona; I never tested it anywhere.

Plus we were having some serious issues on the 1984 500 with Michelin's front radial tyre. On the 250 the radial worked fine, but that was because the bike was designed around it, whereas the 500 had been made for a bias-ply tyre.

"THE PHILOSOPHY BEHIND IT WAS THE BELIEF THAT YOU HAD TO GET THE CENTRE OF GRAVITY WAY, WAY LOW."

My first race with the NSR250 was at Daytona, and I won that – and then we went to South Africa for the first GP, and I won again there on it. It was without question one of the easiest bikes ever to race, so well balanced and forgiving, and you could ride the thing so hard.

That hurt us as the season went on, Honda stopped working on it, because the NSR500 was the problem. There was another thing that the 250 showed us; the first V4 didn't respond very well to steering input. But the 250 when Horike designed it, you knew it had something; so now, let's try to bring that to the V4.

In testing they were running into some issues with the radial tyres, with chatter all the time. The 250 suffered from that a little, but not nearly as dramatically.

Below: Erv Kanemoto looks tense during a Daytona pit stop.



CONVENTIONAL THINKING



I liked the much more hectic pace of 250 racing because I came from dirt track, so I'm used to very aggressive close-quarters racing, so you take better advantage of any chance you get, and go for any gap that opens up.

The guys I raced with are two of the greatest 250 riders ever, but with dramatically different styles, Carlos Lavado and Toni Mang, both of them very fair but very dramatic riders. So while we were still having issues with the 500, with the 250 we started out strong from the beginning; we won in Kyalami, we would have won in Spain but the exhaust pipe split, but I was winning or coming second on the thing every time except for Jarama.

Even though I was a pretty fit guy, doing two big races the same day one after the other was really tough. At Jarama I remember the 500 was first because they wanted to run it before noon so that King Juan Carlos could see the race and at the Italian GP at Mugello, the 500 was first for no apparent reason except maybe TV; that was a tough race day because it was so hot.

I got on the podium on the 500, and I didn't even go back and change leathers. I'm drinking as much water as I can, and I rush off to the pre-grid, and Toni and Carlos are the only ones still waiting for me – what sporting gentlemen.

We still had to push start and when the flag fell I said 'let's go!' to my legs, but I could hardly move. I was just exhausted, and so I got off mid-pack – but I ran Toni down about halfway through and ended up winning the race.

We had a gentleman's agreement that on both the 250 and 500 rostrums they wouldn't spray me with champagne if I had another race to come after that one, but that day in Italy I was all done – literally. So we had a champagne shower, and it felt so good.

There were other things besides the actual racing that were probably more difficult, such as having to run the two bikes back to back, and not be able to debrief on either until after practice was ended.

Fortunately, I have near total recall – thank you for that, Lord. That 250 was, without question, the greatest bike I've ever ridden, and it pioneered what HRC understood was the route to take with the 500, so it was really the foundation for every NSR500.

After that first test at Suzuka with the 250 I'm thinking – hey, this might be a breeze? We're just going to take that 250 and double it up. So almost three months later at Surfers Paradise Honda shows up without the new NSR500, but with its existing upside-down '84 500.

Honda's not sure it actually wants to go that new route, so there were some internal issues within HRC. We have the NSR250, we have this NSR500 which was the 1984 model with weight strapped to it in different places, and I have to somehow test around 300 different radial tyres for Michelin.

I would wake up in the morning down there; look in the mirror at the age of 23 and think – who in the world ever thought about doing this? My hands are

bleeding, and I'm having to get them taped up because I'm doing all these countless laps just on the off-chance that the tyres I'm trying to get to work on the 500 are going to be what I'm going to need on a bike that's going to be completely different to the one I'm riding.

I don't see the conventional NSR500 until they turn up with it at Daytona in March. Of course it's great there; I wasn't doing the 200- because now that's a Superbike race, but we do have an AMA Formula 1 100-miler, and I won that on it.

I did also ride in the Superbike race and won that, so I won all three races I contested. First time out with the conventional NSR500 I had an issue with ground clearance, because with the radial tyre technology you can run higher corner speed. I also had a bit of a chatter issue which showed up big time at the first GP race at Kyalami; it was the worst chatter I had ever experienced.

I won the 250 race, but Eddie Lawson beat me on the 500, he rode really well and the Yamaha went well, so I realised, hey, this is going to be tough! He just rode away from me, and I couldn't do anything about it since we were chattering like crazy on the new Michelin radials – Yamaha ran Dunlops. Eddie was on a roll having won the World Championship for the first time the previous season.

I knew right away that once the first four or five races were up, if I didn't have this 500 thing figured out, we were probably not going to continue with the 250. I knew Honda would surely ask me to stop riding the 250 to focus on the 500, which was so important for the company.

After Kyalami we go to Rijeka and test front radials, plus trying different crankshaft weights and frame stiffness to produce different chassis harmonics, in case it was a vibration issue that caused stability problems. But the inherent problem was the radials.

After Kyalami is Jarama, so Sunday morning we have two tyres to test, and I put on one and straight away it's chattering. So, I go to the other one, which is the last tyre we've got to try out, and I knew right away it felt pretty good.

I went into Turn One at the end of my first lap and it felt good there, but then in Turn Two I peel the bike in there on the brakes and get halfway in and then it just goes *pooff* so quick, it's the quickest I ever crashed.

I couldn't get my hand out in time, so it hit the ground as I went down, and put a hole in my arm from my elbow to my hand because my hand got stuck under the 'bar before the bike dug in and cartwheeled several times, with pieces flying everywhere.

The worst part was that they were running the 500cc race ahead of the 250 at 11am so the king of Spain could be there, so I have precious little time to repair myself. Anyway, Erv and the guys get the bike back together again, and I end up winning the 500 race with my hands broke up after leading every lap, and I'm leading the 250 race, but the exhaust splits so I only finish ninth.

All these issues were affecting me as a rider. So my hand is hurt and we've got to somehow get this thing figured out before I get hurt worse than I am already.

Eventually they fixed it; it was a combination of chassis stiffness and getting the exact right radial construction, and it was at the German GP, in the last session on Saturday afternoon, that we make the breakthrough.

It was just one of those moments I can remember like it was yesterday. I went out through the first chicane, through the right hander out the back, and I shouted out inside my helmet – YES! I dropped my lap time in that one session by a second and a half - Eddie was quicker, but I was second quickest. Now we can go racing!

Next day it was a wet race, and Christian Sarron won it on the Yamaha, so I didn't actually get the benefits of that right away.

We haven't talked about the engine; that had obviously changed a huge amount from the year before, with a better powerband even if it still didn't have the jump out of a turn that the NS500 three had, but the V4 had a better linear drive and a wider powerband, so we could get the horsepower a lot easier, and the fact of a softer initial drive but a stronger midrange made it better as we started getting more power.

We had a radar gun to monitor my exit speed in testing in those days before telemetry and I really worked on this.

We experimented quite a bit with carburettor sizes, and while we did change exhaust pipes initially a little bit for different tracks, we soon hit on a happy medium for both bikes and stayed with those exhausts.

At one stage in 1985 we had an engine that we didn't think would be very good – but I used it to win the French GP. Erv said we needed to try

this thing and it eventually led to what was the big bang engine.

It sounded quite a bit flatter and it worked, specifically at Le Mans, where the slow corners and bumpy surface meant I was having trouble getting the power down with the conventional V4 motor.

Once we resolved the tyre issues, we had a nice handling package and it made life so much easier. Basically it was such a big change that my season split into pre-Germany '85 and post-Germany.

We did have an issue in Salzburgring, where I got out front in the 500 race and it started raining, and they red-flagged it. We did aggregate times, so we did the restart. We put a wet front and Eddie had a cut slick and we both had intermediate rears. We made a wrong choice, but that's racing.

So it dried up and it was like riding on jelly. The last four laps we're going through lapped traffic and I'm trying to stay with Eddie because I had a 2.2 second advantage. That last couple of laps the problem was the right hander going up the hill with the metal barrier on the outside, and every time I tilt it over instead of coming back it's pushing me wider.

I end up winning that thing by 3000th of a second on aggregate, but where I tore the bicep in my arm bothered me for the rest of the season, just trying to control the thing and tugging it back.

We had another wet race that year at Silverstone, and that was especially memorable because that day I had both races turn out completely the opposite. The 250 British GP was the worst planned race I had ever done – period.

I went into that race knowing that all I needed to do was to finish fourth and I'd won the World Championship. It was one of those epiphany things kind of like Oulton Park on the last day of the first Match Races I'd raced in.

I was 18 years old and I wanted to prove a point, and because of that I crashed Erv's Yamaha. I walked back and told Erv that would never happen again – I could have won that race and been top point scorer in the series, but I let my pride interfere with judgment.

So now, five years later, here I am at Silverstone with three races to go in the championship and if I can wrap up the 250 title first and then win the 500 race, then I can clinch the 500 championship in Sweden.

So, I've got a great plan; all I have to do is finish fourth in the 250 race. Not a good idea! Probably the worst thing I had ever done up to that point in my career. The race starts and they're all flying, but I'm struggling to keep up – I mean there are people all around me and in front of me, and I'm just hanging on.

If Alan Carter hadn't crashed, I would have finished fifth, but I got my fourth place because of what somebody else did, not me.

When that 500cc race started, I thought – I'm going to do the complete opposite, I mean I'm going to just GO. It's pouring with rain, but after



six or seven laps I have a big lead, and so then I rode to the finish.

That was a day of two completely different things. I won the 250 championship in the worst race I had ever ridden to that point. But the 500 race at Silverstone that year was absolutely one of the best races I have ever ridden, maybe the best.

It gave me a lot of satisfaction – and this time I was very happy that the 500 race was after the 250. It set me on course to clinch the title in Sweden, which I duly did.

Of course, Honda was very pleased about this, especially after starting so late in designing the bike, but I was just part of an incredible team. It was a privilege for me to be involved with people who have gone on to do so much in our sport, and I am just a small part of that achievement of winning two world titles in the same year with two completely new bikes.

Horike designed the 250 in its entirety as well as the 500 chassis, and Kanazawa did the 500 engine, obviously with a great team of HRC engineers to back them both up.

Kanazawa also had a real impact on the Pro-Link suspension design, and he'll tell you that how he came up with that was that he would go out and watch me in testing to see what I would do to get through a turn, and he could see how it would load, then kick back and push the front, and that's what he always tells his young engineers.

Designing something is one thing, but nothing replaces going out and watching, and talking to the rider. From that he knew what I was struggling with, and so his ability to make the NSR500 handle so well definitely came from going out and watching it in action in turns. Without question the hardest I ever rode – besides when I was battling with Kenny in 1983 – was in testing.

That's how we made 1985 into such a great year for us both – myself and Honda.

The upside down NSR500 looks completely wrong with the bodywork removed.

"EVEN NOW I GET A SHIVER THINKING OF MAYBE HAVING THAT CRASH ON THE BANKING AT DAYTONA."

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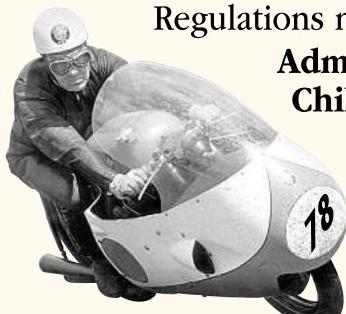
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One winning Formula

Bernie Ecclestone racing motorcycles? Norton in Formula One?

This is the story of how motorcycle racing engines played a role in the careers of many Formula One drivers but also powered Grand Prix cars to the World Championship.

Words: Norm DeWitt **Photographs:** Jim Hunter, The Klementaski collection, Norm DeWitt, and 500race.org





Many know Bernie Ecclestone for his success through management of Formula One; others may remember him for his years owning Brabham, or for hiring Gordon Murray, who designed their innovative Formula One cars. However, there is a side to Bernie that few are aware of. His story starts with racing motorcycles.

Bernie Ecclestone had a natural tendency towards entrepreneurship. He funded his early racing buying and selling whatever bikes or parts he could find, as he explains: "I had a dealership (before the Compton & Ecclestone dealership), buying and selling AJS and Nortons. I used to race bikes, Norton Manx and Velocette." Was it just anything you could get your hands on? "Yep, but only the top quality, you do the best you can."

Ecclestone's local track was Brands Hatch. "That was all there was in those days. It used to be a grass track that I would race on with the motorcycles. I raced there at the first race when it was tarmac." The first race held at the newly paved Brands Hatch was for the 500cc cars, run on April 16, 1950. The circuit ran counter-clockwise similar in layout to how it was run when it was a grass track.

By then Bernie was a partner in the Compton & Ecclestone motorcycle dealership, with Fred Compton. It wasn't long before Ecclestone was racing cars along with the motorcycles. The biggest class for up and coming racers was 500cc, dominated by motorcycle engines, mostly in Cooper chassis. John Cooper won the Brighton Speed Trials in 1947 and by 1948 his Coopers were becoming hugely popular.

John won the first race of 1948, but by the third race a young Stirling Moss won his first of nine main event victories in his Cooper MK II. For their first year of production in 1948, Coopers came with speedway versions of 500cc JAP engines. It wasn't long before there were variants of any available 500 or 1000cc engine installed.

In the 500cc class, the Norton Manx rapidly became the engine of choice, as Sir Stirling Moss confirms: "The problem was that in those days, if you could get it you wanted what was known as a double knocker Norton, which was a 500cc racing Norton engine and you'd quite often have to buy the whole bike and then throw the other bit away, as they were like hen's teeth."

From my point of view, you bought the best engine. The HRD Vincent engine was another one (to have), they also did a more important 1000cc one. It was hard to find state of the art engines from the motorcycle manufacturers."

As a result, Stirling ran the JAP engine in the 1000cc class rather than the Vincent Twin. The Manx Cup Races were held at the Isle of Man in 1949, led by Stirling Moss with his 1000cc Cooper-JAP until his engine stopped.

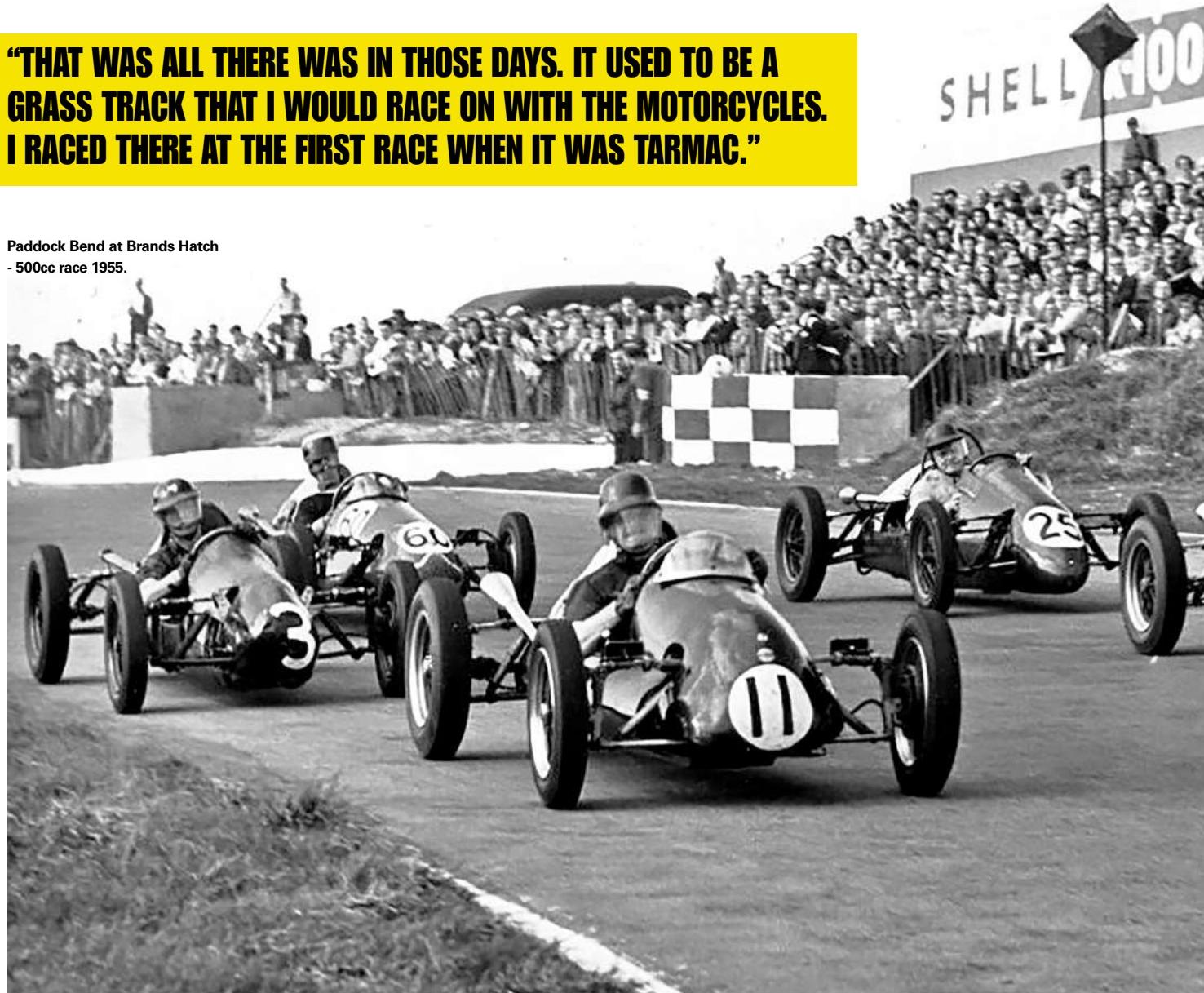
Stirling again: "That was on a much shortened circuit, something like two to four miles in length. It was never the Mountain Course, but that would have been fantastic."

"The JAP engine was cheap and reliable, and did a good job. You'd just go to the races and run it. I had a very good engineer who was my mechanic, Alf Francis."

Rod Coleman, who was about to embark upon many years of success in Grand Prix motorcycle racing, was an interested spectator at the Manx Cup races. "I was in the IoM in 1949 when a major car race was held; there were 500cc cars. I was spectating on a fast length of road passing Governors Bridge, this being a flat out section before the finish line."

"THAT WAS ALL THERE WAS IN THOSE DAYS. IT USED TO BE A GRASS TRACK THAT I WOULD RACE ON WITH THE MOTORCYCLES. I RACED THERE AT THE FIRST RACE WHEN IT WAS TARMAC."

Paddock Bend at Brands Hatch
- 500cc race 1955.



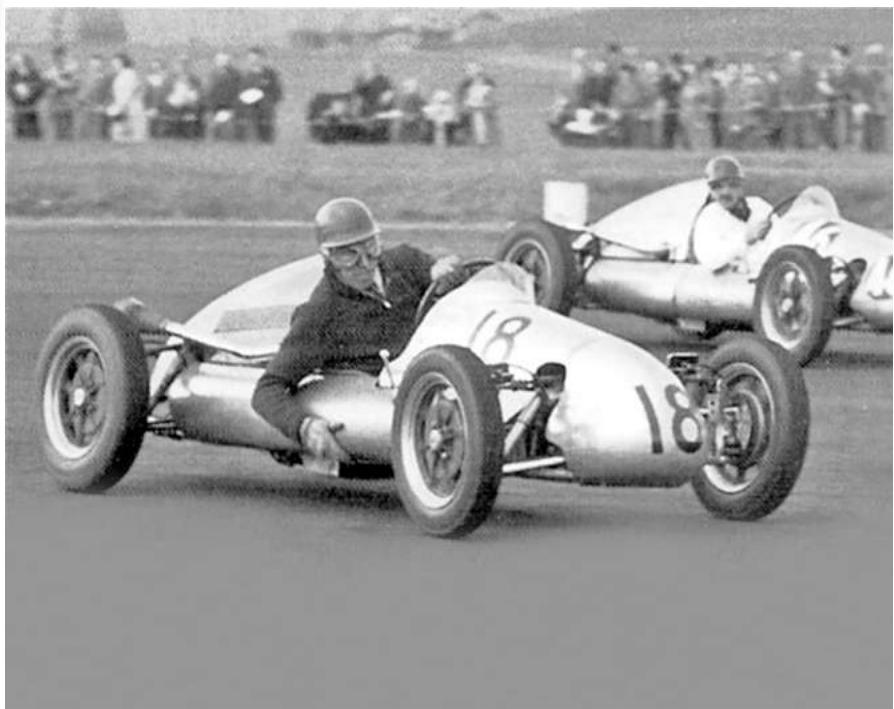
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for 500 c.c. Class	for 500 c.c. Class RECORD
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July 18 PRESCOTT HILL CLIMB	Oct. 9 DUNHOLME AERODROME 500 c.c. 50-MILE RACE
for 500 c.c. Class RECORD	Int. 3rd, 3rd, 4th and Fastest Lap
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"The first car to appear was a JAP engine Cooper driven by Stirling Moss and he was not only leading, there was no one else in sight! It was quite a while before the next car appeared, this being driven by Reg Parnell. The length of the race was too much to ask from a short circuit speedway engine so Stirling Moss duly retired."

Rod was less than impressed with many of these machines. "Some of the 500cc cars were of rather poor design. There was one with some sort of rubber suspension and driven by quite a well-known driver; may have been Roy Salvadori.

"When this car entered the sudden drop in the road passing Governors Bridge, it got into a great leaping pattern completely out of control. When the two nearside magnesium wheels hit the large footpath they disintegrated in a very spectacular smoking display. Next, the car was shooting up onto the footpath and then did a sharp left turn into someone's garden and stopped before the front door!" The Isle of Man Formula Car races didn't last long.

Bernie won the race for Juniors at Brands Hatch in 1951 winning both heat and final. Motorcycle ace Harold Daniell was fourth. Ecclestone won his heat at the *Daily Telegraph* International Trophy race later that year, and did the same at Brands, winning his heat race from Stuart Lewis-Evans, a promising newcomer. It wasn't long before Lewis-Evans was on everyone's shortlist of 500cc talent, winning the 500cc race at the Silverstone International meet in 1952, to follow his victory at Brands Hatch earlier in the year. Stirling Moss won the first 500cc race at London's Crystal Palace in 1953, but third that day was Lewis-Evans.

Bernie Ecclestone had also raced his Cooper with various engines, as he confirms: "The Cooper had a JAP engine, that or a Norton Manx. In those days I was racing with Stirling Moss, there were a lot of known name guys back then."

Given that Stirling Moss was as fast a driver as could be found in the 500cc class, there could be no better yardstick for an aspiring driver to

measure himself against. Stirling Moss again: "I guess I first met Bernie about 1949. He was selling motorcycles and he drove a 500cc racing car. As far as I can remember he was as good as anybody else; I remember him as being in certain races I was in."

Other names in the class were to make their mark; Peter Collins, John Cooper, Cliff Allison, Ken Wharton, Harry Schell, Ken Tyrrell, Ivor Bueb, and Raymond Sommer, who had already made his mark as the first winner of a Grand Prix for new manufacturer Ferrari (1947 Turin Grand Prix). Sadly, Sommer perished at the wheel of his 500cc Cooper, crash protection not being a priority.

Despite the obvious risks, and lack of circuit safety, the 500cc cars were attracting motorcycle racers as well, no doubt putting their 'connections' to great effect in obtaining the best engines. At Crystal Palace in July of 1953, Norton's legendary TT winner Harold Daniell won the Petit Prix, his 500cc car not surprisingly powered by a Norton. However, the main event was won by Stuart Lewis-Evans, who had led Daniell to the flag repeatedly in 1952.

In September '53, Stuart Lewis-Evans again won the main event at Crystal Palace over Stirling Moss. Moss, Ecclestone, and Lewis-Evans were all destined for greater things, and their shared destiny was Formula One. Ecclestone again: "I hung up my helmet in 1953 (from racing motorcycles) but then I raced Formula Junior until 1955. I had a big accident in a Formula 3 car at the Brands Hatch short circuit." It took yet another Norton connection to join up the dots and create British racing history.

Top: Ken Tyrrell of F1 fame, hanging on to his Cooper Norton.

Inset advert: Cooper ad from late 1948 touting the success of their Mk II. (as in Mark 2).



TWO WHEELS TO FOUR

A former Norton racer, Tony Vandervell, also entered the picture. From the Vandervell Bearing Company family, he was one of the many industrialists committed to putting Britain on the map in Formula 1, through the BRM project. In the wake of continued failures by their V16 car, Norton director and majority shareholder Vandervell was truly ready to move on to something else.

Tony Vandervell's Thin Wall Specials were privately entered Ferraris in the early 1950s, providing a stage to promote his family's thinwall bearing business. His team found itself in a perfect position to become an object of national pride, a new constructor with an innovative English car taking on the Continental manufacturers.

Vandervell sought out Leo Kuzmicki, the Polish engineering wizard who had kept the Norton Manx at the sharp end of 350cc and 500cc Grand Prix racing with a number of clever modifications. An obvious choice, Kuzmicki was tasked with creating the new racing engine for the 1954 season, a two litre four-cylinder, best described as four twin cam Manx Norton top ends, hairpin valve springs and all, combined onto a common crankcase, with four Amal carburetors.

With F1 being a 2.5 litre formula, this Kuzmicki engine was eventually increased in capacity by larger and larger bore diameters until eventually it was a 2.5 litre four with Bosch fuel injection. All the engine technology was of little use without a chassis to match, and for 1956 Colin Chapman of Lotus was brought in to design an advanced space frame which was wrapped in Frank Costin's aerodynamic bodywork, incorporating such advances as a NACA duct air intake. Combining the name Vandervell with Thinwall (bearings), the team was called Vanwall.

Eventually Ecclestone was to manage Lewis-Evans and that path led both to Formula One, and

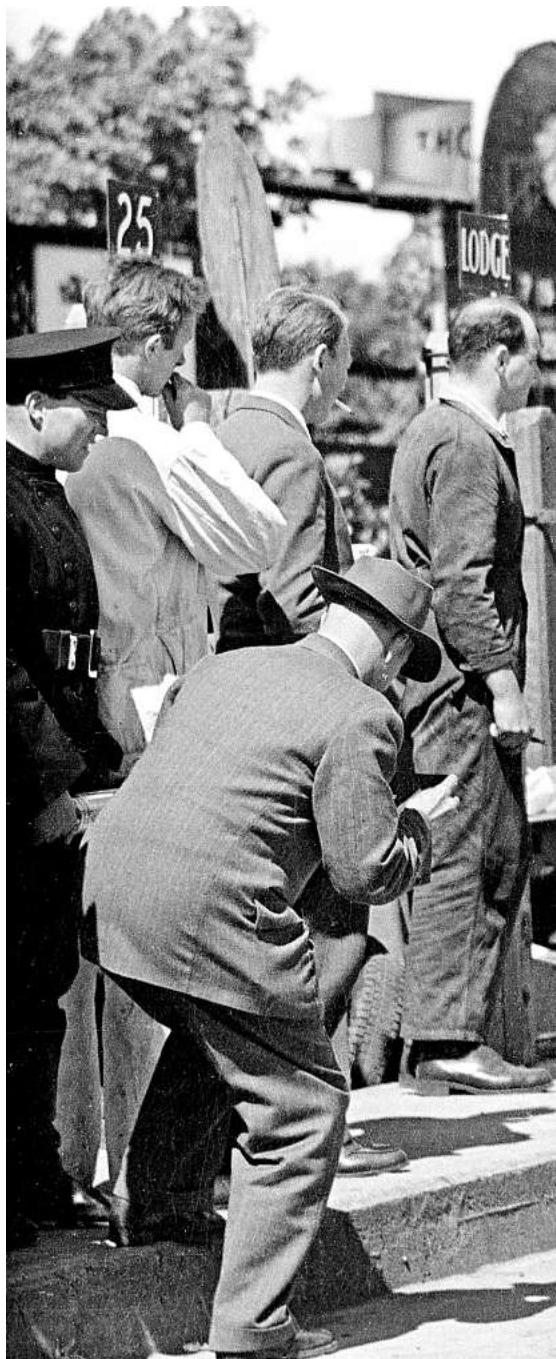
then to Vanwall. When you think back on the 'Racing for England' slogan from the Hesketh era, it pales in comparison with the success achieved by Vanwall trying to bring home the World Championship in the 1950s. Vanwall efforts for 1954-55 were largely forgettable, with Peter Collins ('54) and Mike Hawthorn ('55). It was the same for 1956 with the possible exception of Harry Schell's challenge to Ferrari at Reims.

Surrey based Connaught was having as much or more success, Tony Brooks in 1955 winning the non-championship Syracuse Grand Prix against a strong field, with the 1956 highlight their cars finishing third and fifth in the last race of the season, at the Italian Grand Prix. Small wonder that Stuart Lewis-Evans would opt for the Connaught when the opportunity arose.

Lewis-Evans had continued racing his 500cc Cooper-Norton to great effect, winning at Crystal Palace yet again in June of 1957, but what really got everyone's attention was when he finished fourth in his first Grand Prix (at Monaco) with the Connaught.

With their financial house in disarray, Connaught soon withdrew from F1, and Stuart was quickly drafted onto the Vanwall team to join his all-British driver line-up of Stirling Moss and Tony Brooks in their massively improved cars.

Moss had won the final race of 1956 at Monza in the latest streamlined Maserati 250f. Moss reflects, "Frankly, I tried everything I could to drive a British car, but one didn't arrive until the Vanwall. When that came along, I signed up along with Stuart Lewis-Evans and Tony Brooks. Stuart was a very fast driver, I'll tell you that." By the end of the 1957 season, Lewis-Evans started from pole in the Italian Grand Prix, the first 3 grid positions being the British drivers in their Vanwalls.



"THE MOTORCYCLE ENGINED 500CC RACERS WERE HAVING A HUGE INFLUENCE IN AMERICA AS WELL. BRUCE KESSLER WAS THE BEST OF THOSE, SOON TO ARRIVE ON THE SCENE IN EUROPE."

Top left: The early days of Brands Hatch, grass track racing counter-clockwise at Start-Finish.

Above: Stuart Lewis-Evans unloading his Cooper-Norton.



Sir Stirling Moss pits his Cooper JAP at the
1949 Manx Cup race in the Isle of Man.

STATESIDE 500S

The motorcycle engined 500cc racers were having a huge influence in America as well. Bruce Kessler was the best of those, soon to arrive on the scene in Europe. "Where I got started was Warren Olson has his eye on me; he had a shop of La Cienega Blvd, LA, and he wanted to get involved with Cooper, an unknown chassis in this country.

"If he would get a chassis, I would get an engine and a drive; I was only 18 or 19 years old. When we got the Mk.IX Cooper it had a JAP engine in it, but the first race we went out and won. Everybody was switching to Nortons and we were forced to switch and put a Manx Norton in the car."

Rod Coleman takes up the story: "I attended meetings with the AMC directors and there never

was any intention of supplying engines for 500cc cars. Likewise Norton never had a policy of supplying separate Manx engines." Kessler continues: "Because of my age, occasionally the SCCA (Sports Car Club of America) would let me race, sometimes they would not. We went undefeated that year, and I also believe we led every lap of every race we ran. I went on to become the 1956 SCCA 500cc National Champion. I was told I was going to Europe with Ferrari.

"At the time nobody knew anything about the west coast except for this guy named Phil Hill (later to be 1961 F1 World Champion for Ferrari). For 1957, I went to Modena and Mimmo Dei, who owned Centro Sud Maserati and had an idea about running a team of Maserati

250fs that he had for me, Carroll Shelby, and Masten Gregory (all Americans). I took my Formula One test and got my approval for my licence."

No doubt in 1957 the highlight for fans of all things British had to be Vanwall winning the British GP at Aintree, driven by Tony Brooks and Stirling Moss (who took over Brooks' car when his failed). Stirling Moss adds: "It was the first time that a British car had ever won the British Grand Prix. It was a big step forward in motor racing."

Kessler now entered the mix: "In 1958 after I won the GT class at the 12 Hours of Sebring, John Cooper brought in Bruce McLaren, and also talked to me about coming to England on a scholarship to England to drive Formula 2.



SIR STIRLING MOSS - 'THE DESIGNER OF THE NORTON MANX ENGINE, VANDERVELL COMMISSIONED HIM TO DO A 4 CYLINDER OF THAT AS THE FORMULA ONE OF THAT ERA WAS 2-1/2 LITRES.'

"However, John only had one car so I drove for Rob Walker in Formula 2. When I got to England, I moved in with Stuart Lewis-Evans' family, we knew each other from when he came to the USA and we got to be friends.

"Stuart took me and introduced me to Bernie Ecclestone, who was a motorcycle dealer at the time. I knew that Stuart and Bernie were really close. Stuart said all the right things... I had just run the Formula 2 car in the Daily Express GP at Silverstone for Rob Walker and that I was driving for John Cooper and had been loaned out to Walker. Bernie asked if I would drive at Monte Carlo for Connaught."

For 1958, in addition to managing Lewis-Evans at Vanwall, Ecclestone had entered the cars from the inactive British Connaught F1 team for the Monaco Grand Prix. These were far from the latest equipment and there were 31 entries trying for the 16 starting spots on the grid.

Ecclestone then entered himself to drive the Connaught again for the British Grand Prix, but Jack Fairman drove the car in the race. The British Grand Prix of 1958 marked the end of the road for Ecclestone the driver.

The Norton Manx based Vanwall still had a few races remaining in its last great challenge. Originally the great strength of the package upon the introduction of the Vanwall in 1954, but by 1958 the Manx based engine was now the weak link, as Stirling confirms: "Yes, probably. But one thing you've got to remember is that our races were three hours minimum. The races were a tremendous test not only of the driver, but of the machinery."

"You've got to realize that in those days, cars were not reliable like they are today. Winning a race was quite an achievement. The engines,

gearboxes... they were nothing like it is now. Now most cars finish, in those days most cars didn't."

The World Championship came down to its climax at the final event in Morocco between Stirling Moss and Mike Hawthorn. Indicative of the carnage of that era, both of Hawthorn's Ferrari teammates had by now been killed, Luigi Musso at Reims, and Peter Collins at the Nurburgring. Sadly the nightmare was now shifting to Vanwall in what should have been the team's greatest hour.

Moss had to win and take fastest lap. Stirling - "And have Mike not be 2nd." Vanwall desperately needed a 1-2 finish. Moss was leading but Tony Brooks was unable to help, his Vanwall having blown up half-way through the race. In the midst of all this Championship drama, Lewis-Evans was now Vanwall's last hope. He needed to move past the Ferraris of Hawthorn and Phil Hill into 2nd place to ensure the title for Moss. Pushing the car to the limit, his engine locked up, which threw the car off the track and it erupted into flames.

In the end, Hawthorn was 1958 World Champion by one point over Moss. Vanwall had won the World Manufacturer's Championship, but it was a somber achievement in the wake of Stuart's accident. Stuart Lewis-Evans succumbed to his burns six days later.

World Champion Mike Hawthorn was soon lost as well, killed in January '59. Bernie Ecclestone walked away from any further involvement with Grand Prix racing for a decade. Stirling Moss retired after a racing accident in 1962, most likely the greatest driver never to win the World Championship.

Bruce Kessler moved on to enormous success as a Hollywood director, his television shows included Mission: Impossible, The Monkees, The

Flying Nun, and The Rockford Files. Of course Bernie Ecclestone returned to Formula 1, and the rest is history.

Special thanks to the 500 Owners Association (500race.org) for allowing use of their photo files in the telling of this story.



Top right: Stuart Lewis Evans racing at Crystal Palace in July 1953

Above: Bruce Kessler racing his Cooper Norton in 1956.

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BRIAN 'NICK' NICHOLLS

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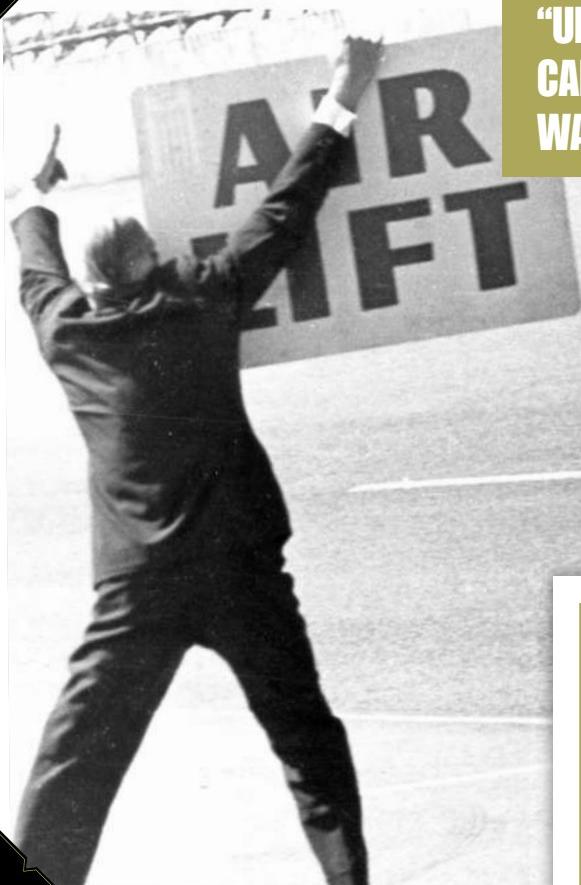
What better way to celebrate the life of Nick Nicholls, as he was known to the world of motorcycling, than with a small selection of some of his iconic images? Up until the last few months of his life the first call I got when *Classic Racer* was published was from Nick, usually to compliment me on something, and occasionally to correct me. From Nick I was proud to take both. I enjoyed our long friendship Nick and I'll miss those calls. I will make sure your memory lives on through *Classic Racer*. Rest in peace my friend.

Malc

Photographs: Mortons Archive



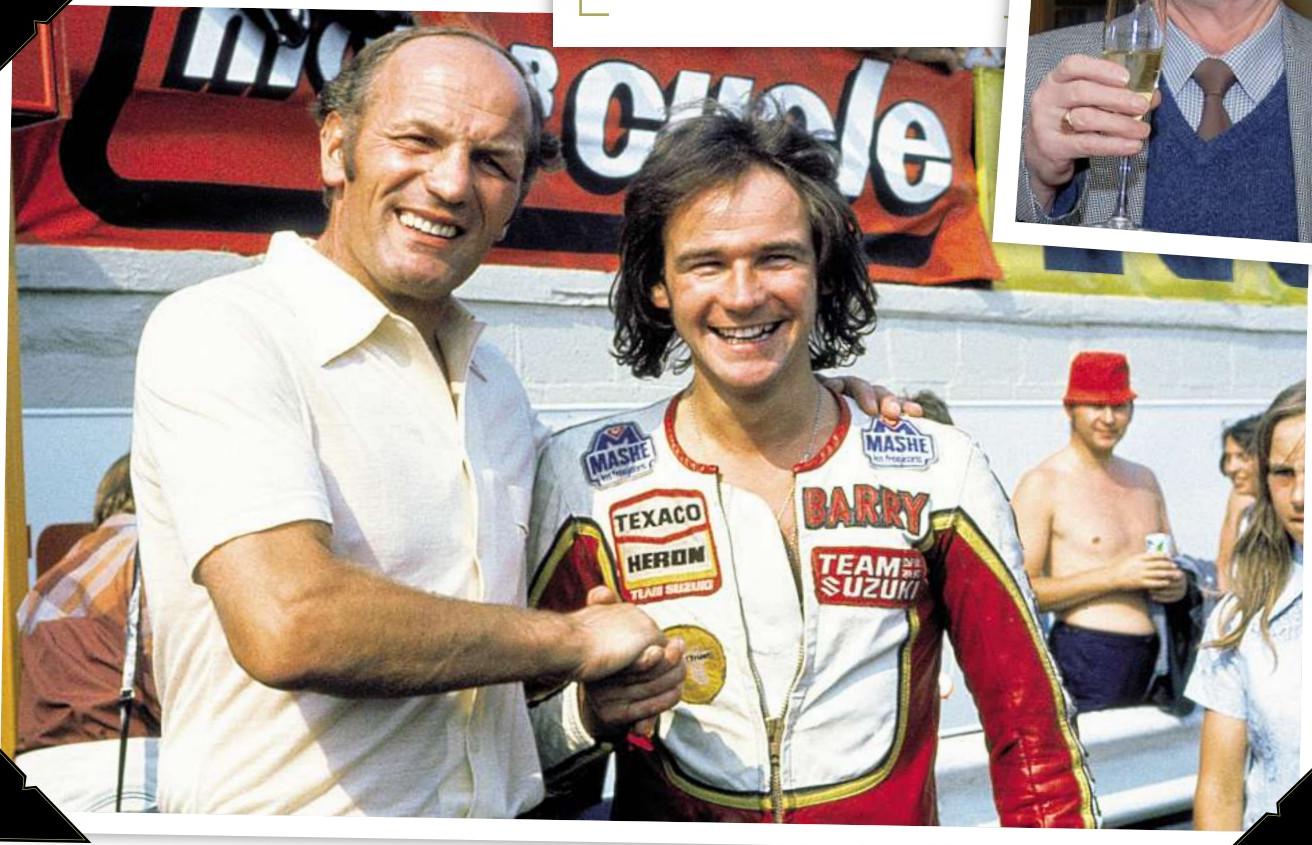
"UP UNTIL THE LAST FEW MONTHS THE FIRST CALL I GOT WHEN *CLASSIC RACER* WAS PUBLISHED WAS FROM NICK."



Left: On his first accredited visit to the Island in 1957 Nick captured this great shot of Moto Guzzi mounted Bill Lomas.

Above: Daytona 1964, when the World was a much bigger place, Nick was on hand to catch Stan Hailwood telling Mike he had broken the World 1 Hour record.

Below: Nick was liked and respected by all the stars of the day and as a result often got the shot others missed. Both Henry Cooper and Barry Sheene enjoyed Brut sponsorship and became good friends as a result





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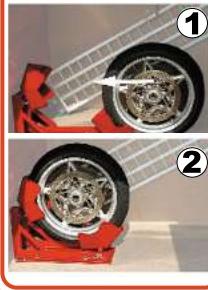
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Thousands of motorcycle enthusiasts enjoyed two days of bikes, bargains and a brand new classic auction at Shepton Mallet's Royal Bath & West showground.

Words: Jack Harrison **Photographs:** Joe Dick



The Carole Nash Bristol Classic MotorCycle Show, which was affected by the flooding in Somerset last year, came back with a bang for 2015. Charterhouse Auctioneers, holding a motorcycle auction at the show for the first time, racked up sales totalling more than £250,000.

Exhibition manager, Nick Mowbray, said: "We are delighted with the two days of the event and many aspects exceeded our expectations, particularly the auction which was a resounding success."

Among the many highlights was a Vincent Black Shadow, which sold for £55,000, while several barn-find restoration projects were snapped up.

It was also a weekend to remember for Dave Joyce who picked up the prestigious Best in Show award for his 1914 Sparkbrook Roadster while the Rudge Enthusiasts Club took the top prize in the club stand category.

Dave said: "All I had of the bike originally was the frame which was fished out of a lake

opposite the garage where I used to work. It had some damage so I suspect it was in an accident; the gearbox and engine were saved and the frame discarded in the lake.

"Given how rare it is, and because of the damage sustained, it took me a while to work out what it was, but once I did then I set about restoring and rebuilding it as a retirement project, along with the help of friends."

"I found the JAP V-twin engine at an autojumble but it was sourcing the gearbox that proved difficult. I managed to track one down in the UK but it could well be it's the only one in the country, it's that unusual."

Nick added: "Last year's Bristol show was excellent, but there's no denying it was severely affected by the awful weather conditions encountered by the region in the early part of 2014."

"It was wonderful to see the crowds come back in huge numbers for what is many people's favourite two-wheel event of the year."

Clockwise from top left: The Charterhouse auction had something for most tastes.

The Gold Star Owners Club put on a great display as usual.

Always prepared to go the extra mile; the Rudge Enthusiasts were in the money again.



This gem in the action might make a challenging restoration.

Classic off-road show goes up a gear

Classic Bike Shows, the new owner of The Putoline *Classic Dirt Bike Show*, enjoyed a successful debut at the Telford International Centre at the end of February, and the winning machines typified the superb standard on offer for visitors to enjoy.

Words and photographs: Malc Wheeler

Steve Butler, Glenn Whittock and Terry House had reason to celebrate as their 1981 Maico Mega 2 was selected as the overall Best in Show from the category winners, despite the trio not even being aware they were eligible to claim a trophy.

"The bike is in mint condition having been recently built and we wanted to come to the show, catch up with some old friends and then officially present the machine to Terry so he can use it in competition," said Glenn.

"We didn't know we were officially entering it to be judged and so we were delighted to find out we'd won not only the Best Motocross award, but the overall Best in Show."

The story was made more special given the fact one of the men responsible for the bike, Steve Butler, had previously worked as a principal Grand Prix mechanic for the Maico factory and had built the Mega 2 using original techniques he had used during his time there. His long-time friend and colleague Glenn had

then used modern engineering methods to refine the bike ready for use in events this year.

The Best Road Racer award went to Steve Linsdell, who was guest of honour at the show along with his son Olie, both successful Isle of Man TT and Classic TT racers.

Steve used the family Linsdell's appearance at the show as incentive to finish the restoration on his very first race machine, a humble 350cc Royal Enfield. The purposeful Enfield took Steve to numerous vintage racing victories, vanquishing many more expensive bikes.

The *Classic Racer Paddock* brought the sounds and smells of road racing to the successful off-road event. Sammy Miller brought along two rare – and very different – road racers, the record breaking Norton Kneeler and four-cylinder Villa, and delighted the crowd by firing them up.

Event organiser Richard Graham said: "The effort from the clubs, private entrants and organisations to bring together this incredible

array of bikes has been superb and all the credit must go to them.

"I couldn't have wished for a better start for the Putoline *Classic Dirt Bike Show* and I'm already looking forward to getting started on plans for next year."

Classic Bike Shows returns to action with the Carole Nash International Classic *MotorCycle Show* at Stafford on April 25-26, the largest classic bike show in the world.

For more details, visit www.classicbikeshows.com

Main: Steve Linsdell explains the development of the Paton to the stand-in MC, Editor Wheeler.

From straight-line racers, top left, to Solo Starters Domi Racer tarmac racing was well represented at the show.



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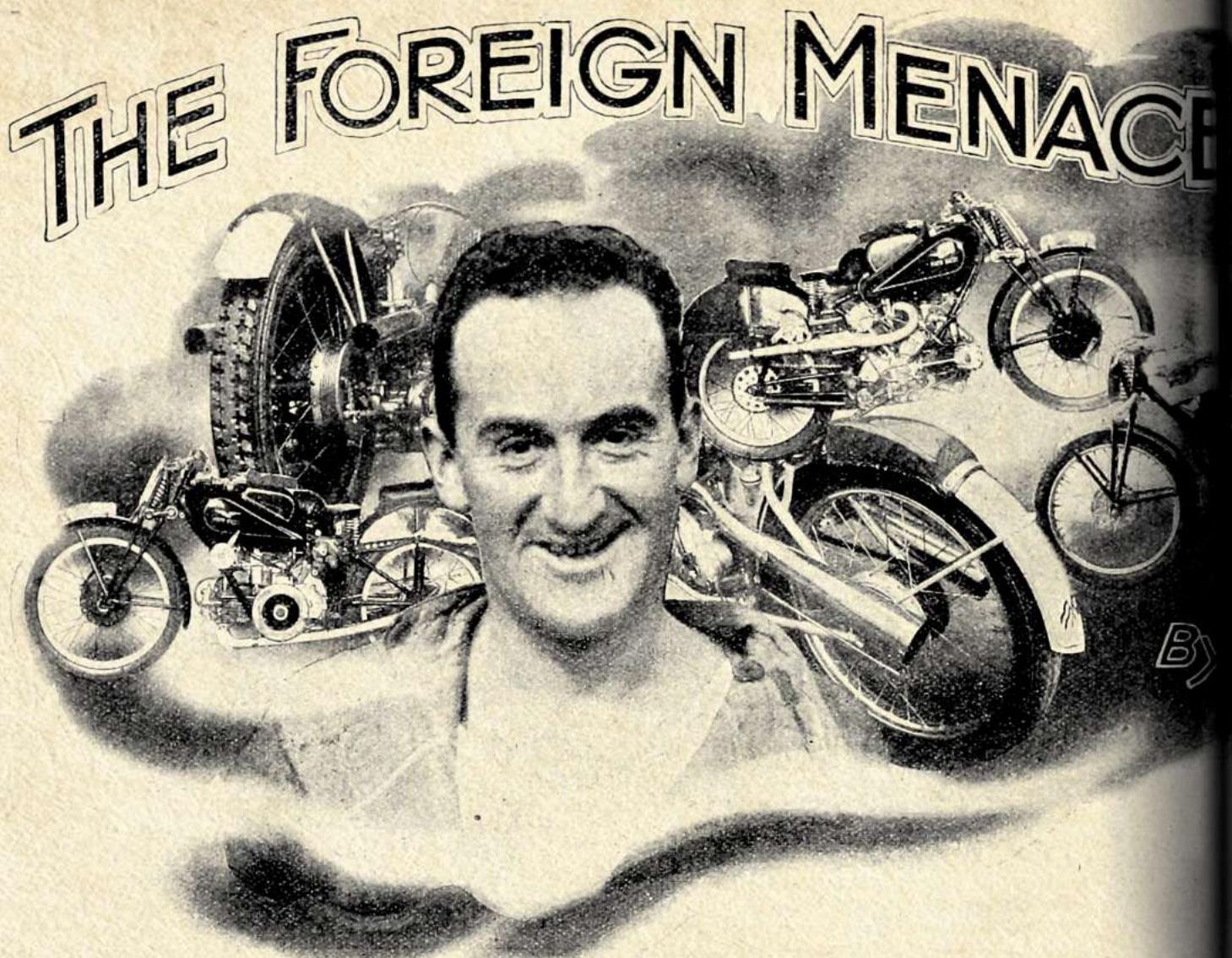
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So you thought the foreign invasion in to TT racing came from the Japanese in the 1960's did you?

You couldn't be more wrong. Way back in 1935 no less a man than Stanley Woods highlights the threat of the 'Foreign Menace'. Enjoy this snapshot straight from the archive.

Malc Wheeler

THERE has, in the past, been a tendency to treat foreign entries in the TT more or less as a joke. There have been, of course, one or two rather notable exceptions to this – isolated entries that have really deserved serious consideration – but, taken as a whole, within the past decade the foreign challenge in the TT has not been extremely formidable.

This state of affairs is, however, no more, and today the foreign challenge is a very serious menace to the long-established supremacy of the English motorcycle. Those Continental firms who have gone in for racing seriously have persevered with grim determination and the result is that nowadays their products can hold their own with the best. But I am dealing more with the foreign challenge so far as the TT is concerned, so I suggest taking a peep at the specifications of the foreign entries in the Island.

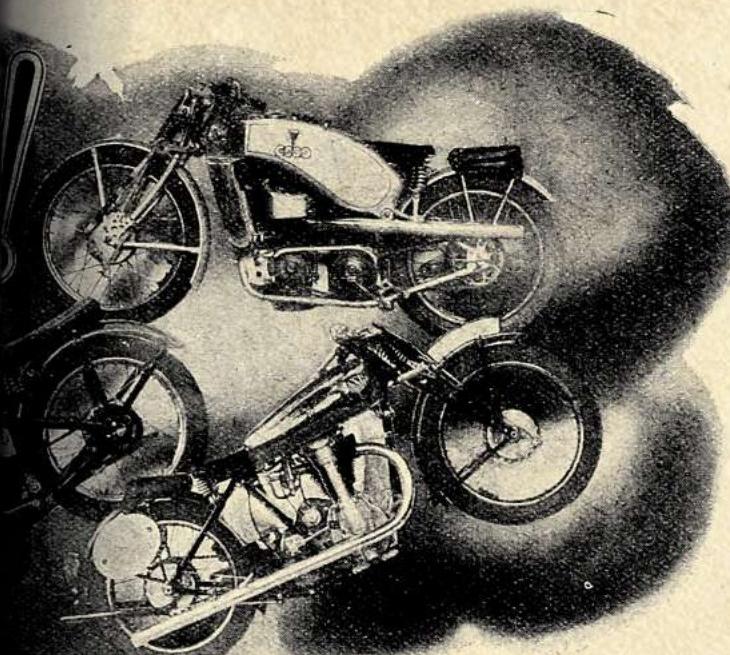
In the first place, originality is the keynote of practically every design, so that in almost every case the machines present a rather unusual and unorthodox appearance to British eyes. Take my own mounts this year: Motoguzzis. The 500 twin, with its 120° engine, naturally attracts more notice than the 250 single –

which is not surprising, especially as the little one has been racing for years and is very well known. Now this Guzzi twin is of unit construction – a very praiseworthy point – and is the nearest possible approach to the ideal twin, which is, of course, a horizontally opposed unit. Housing such an engine in the type of frame that is considered ideal for racing is, however, far from easy, so the Guzzi people compromised with a 120° motor.

EXPERIMENTS

During the past 12 months the machine has shown up to great advantage and many experiments have been made with it. That is one of the strong points about Continental manufacturers; they are not in the least conservative.

They are ready to try out every idea put forward – always provided it is a sensible one, of course. For example, Guzzis have been employing spring frames on their touring machines for about eight years or more, so last January, I suggested that it might be very advantageous to adapt spring frames to the racing machines. The firm consented to experiment with the idea immediately, and inside six weeks the first racing



Four different foreign marques are represented in the T.T. this year. They are the D.K.W.s and the N.S.U.s from Germany, the Jawas from Czechoslovakia and the Guzzis from Italy.

TANLEY WOODS

*An Article Specially Written
for "Motor Cycling" by the
Popular Irish Star*

models with spring frames were being tried out, and I had my first ride on one of them in the GP of Tripoli, after which I made a further suggestion that the 250 machines should be similarly equipped. The result is that all the racing Guzzis have spring frames which have been brought to a very fine pitch of perfection and which are very delightful to ride on.

As, of course, everyone knows, it is necessary to damp the action of a spring frame at varying speeds. Guzzis produced two very efficient absorbers, one on each side of the machine at the rear, but they could not be altered very well when racing. So the Guzzi designers evolved a very neat arrangement whereby a handle, mounted on the near-side of the tank, alters the setting very easily and quickly. The twin Guzzis have a maximum of over 112mph with correspondingly good acceleration.

Steering and road holding are excellent. The only fault or criticism that can be made is not a serious one – merely that the models are rather on the heavy side. They weigh 375lb unladen, but this is a matter that will be attended to next year.

No, there is no doubt about it, this 500 is a machine capable of more than holding its own with the world's best!

The 250 Guzzi, of course, needs no introduction. It has already shown its paces in the Island in past years, especially in the hands of Pietro Ghersi. This model is so successful that it is unchanged from last year.

Now let us turn to the DKWs. These supremely interesting machines have already been described in detail in Motor Cycling, so that there is no need for me to go into any technicalities. While I have no accurate information of the speeds of the two models, I do know that they are very fast. For instance, during the practising on Wednesday morning, when I made that record lap at 841/2mph, I overtook a 500 DKW on a corner, being able to do so because of my better knowledge of the course. After the corner there was a long straight section, and I was only barely able to hold my own with the DKW along this section.

Had he known the corner properly I do not think I should have managed to pass him. The road-holding and steering appear to be excellent, so that here again we have an unconventional 500 capable of holding its own with the world's best. The speed and acceleration of the 250 are well-known factors, vide last year's European Grand Prix, when they won the 250 class against a formidable array of British riders. Little is known, as yet, of the performance of the Jawas, but here, again, we find a successful and very unconventional layout. The frame is of pressed steel and is tremendously strong, while the detail finish is really excellent.

The NSU machines follow accepted British practice. They have been racing regularly for a long time and have met with many successes on the Continent.

SUPERB FINISH

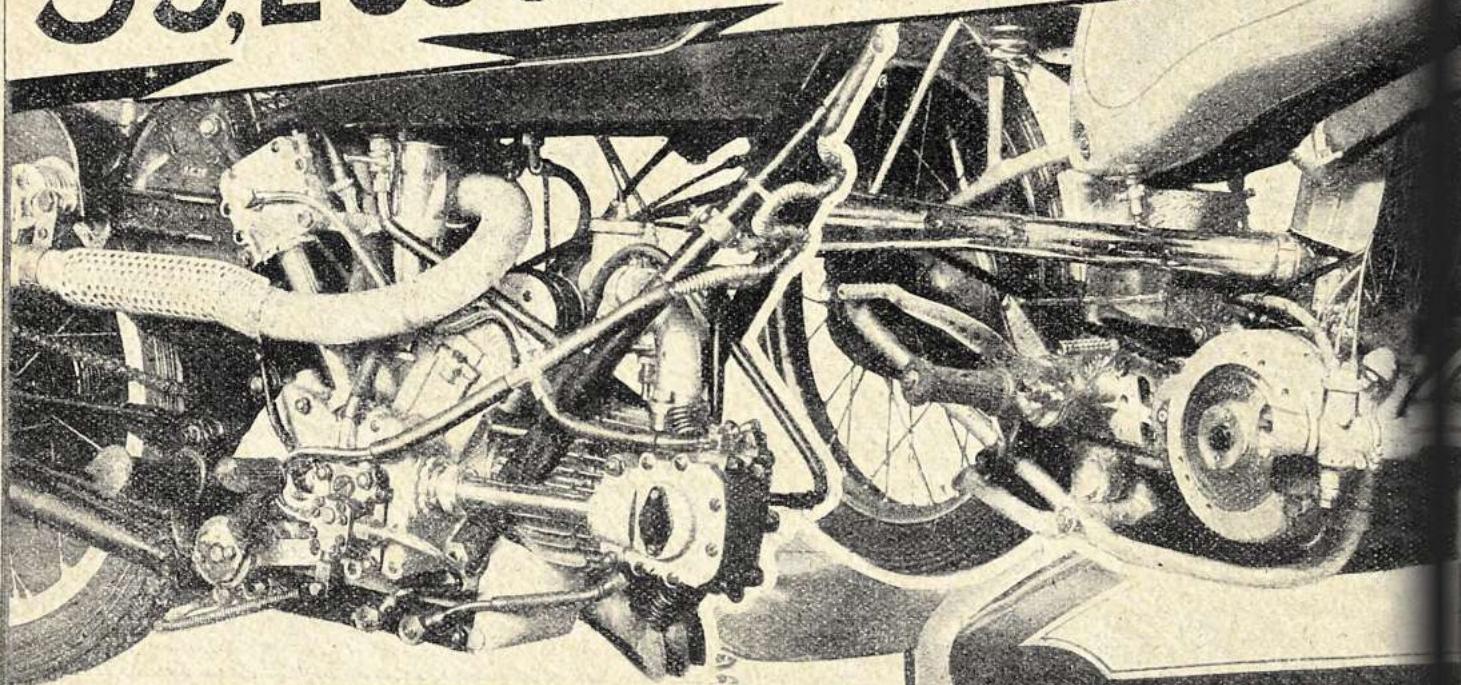
In every case the superb finish of Continental racing machines is immediately noticed; the DKWs in particular, look perfect engineering jobs and so do the others. Personally, I think this foreign invasion is a grand thing for motorcycling, because the more competition there is the greater the efforts to combat it.

British manufacturers have worked very hard and achieved some wonderful results. A foreign win would, however, make them work harder still, because the one thing they do not want to lose is the supremacy of their products. It would, perhaps, encourage them to experiment with more unconventional designs, for it stands to reason that so long as any one particular design is successful it would be folly to change it.

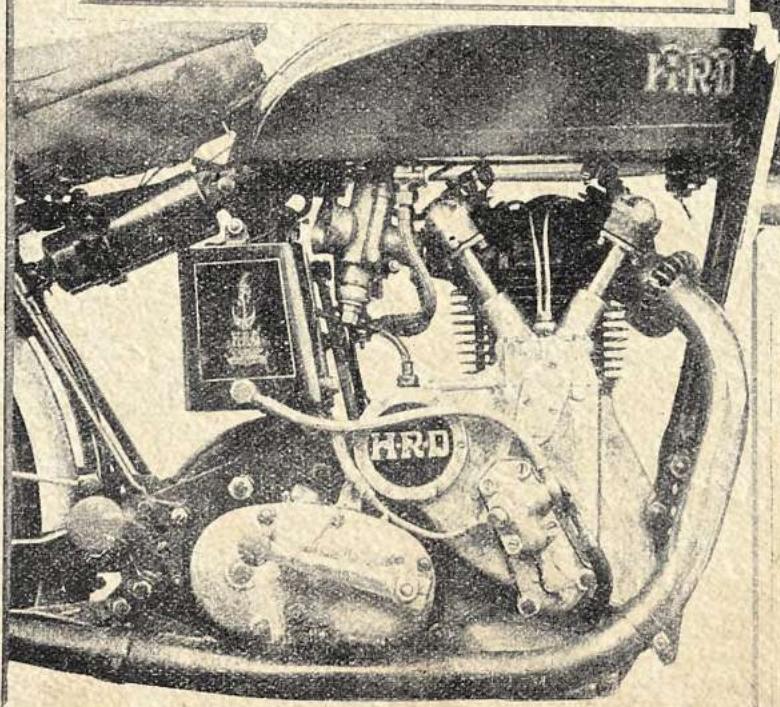
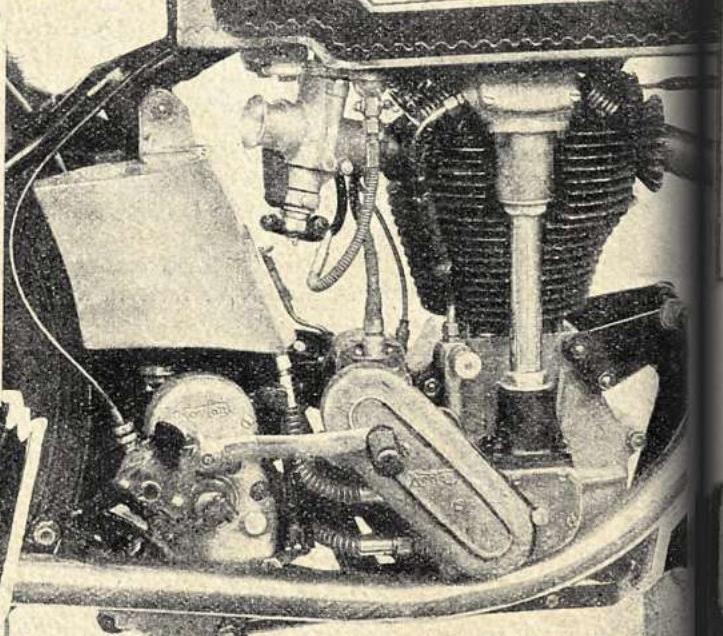
Taken all round, I really do think this foreign invasion will do a power of good. It will have a stimulating effect, and the more international the TT races the greater will be the interest.

May the challenge never cease!

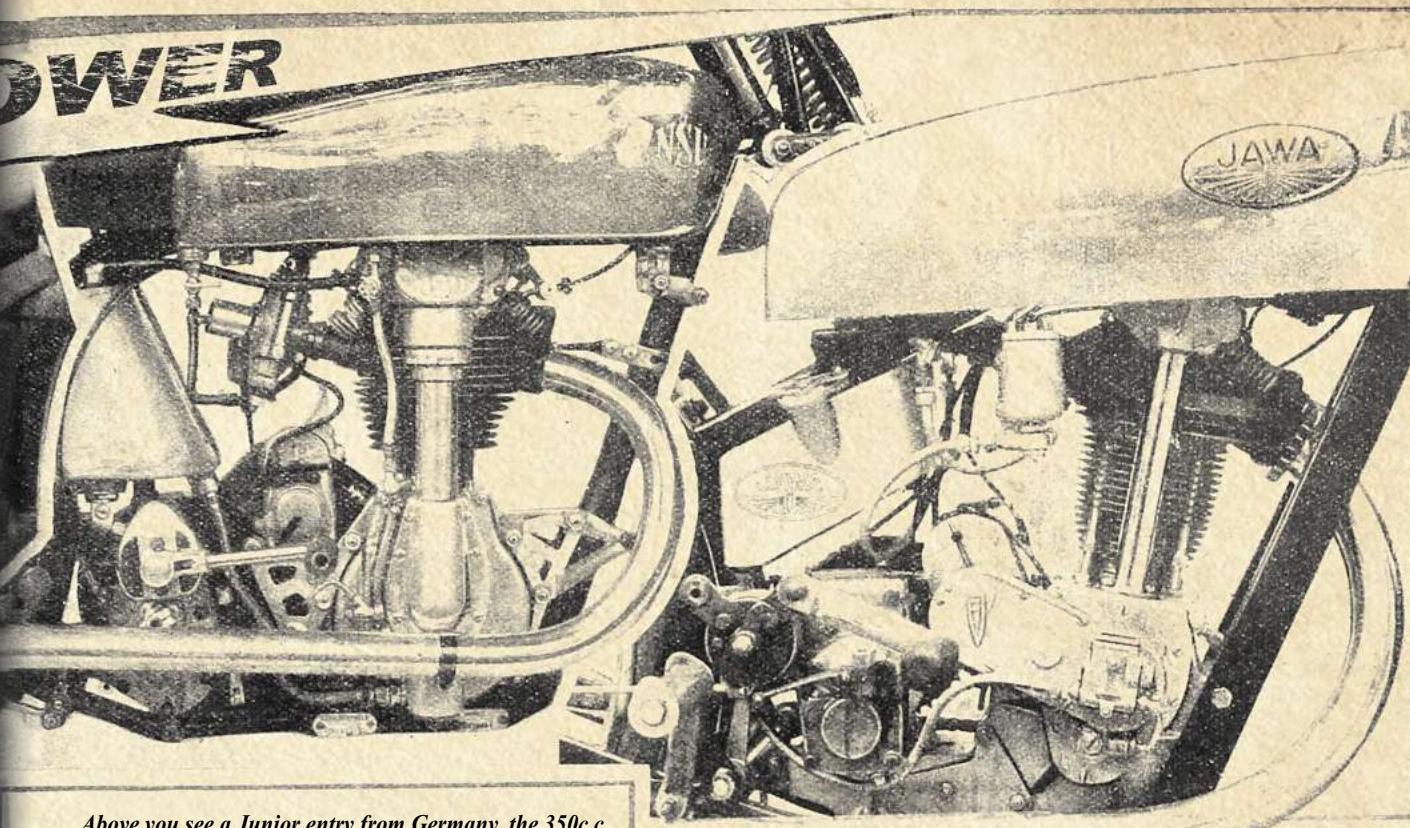
39,283c.c.s of T.T. PO



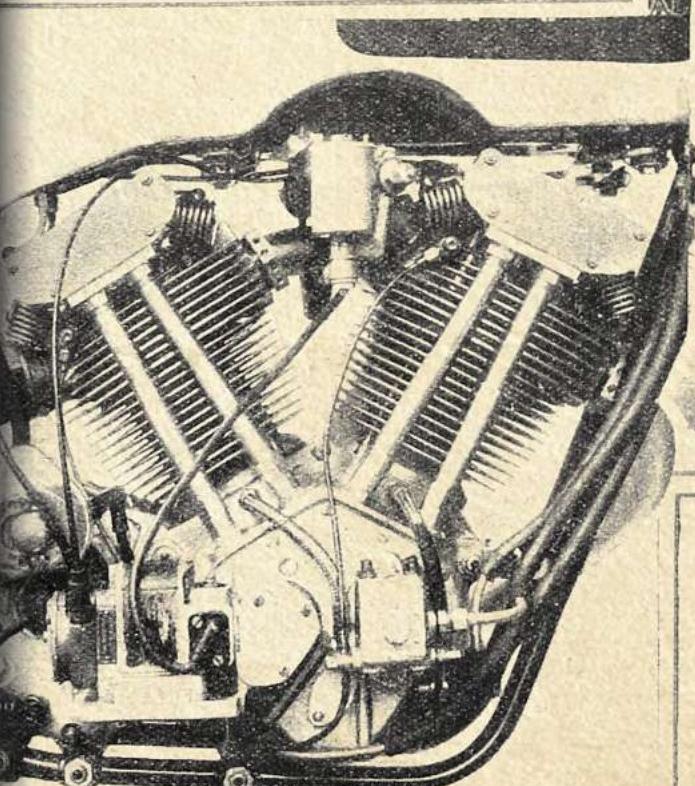
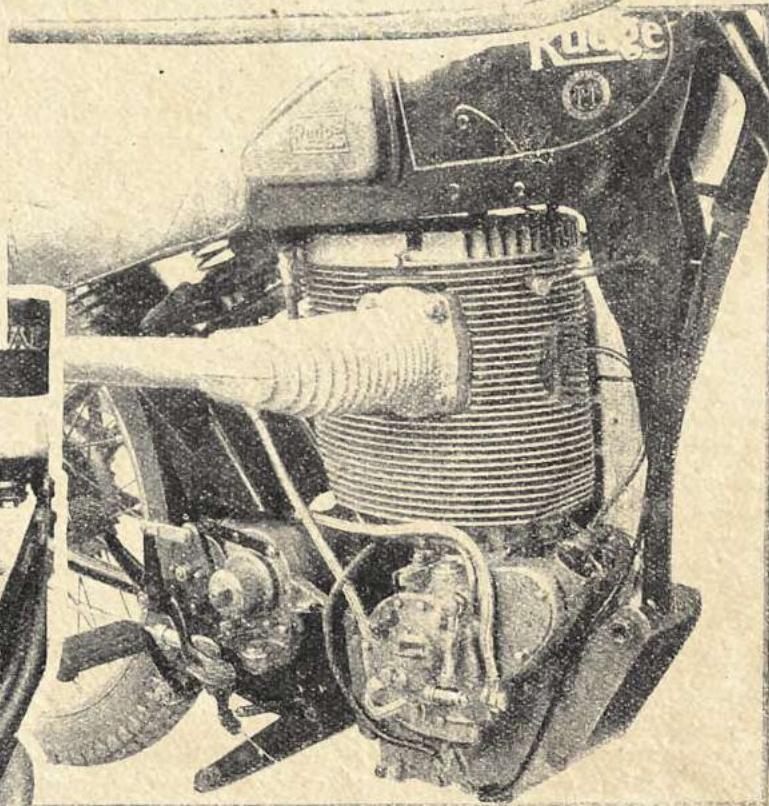
What a colossal engine 39,283c.c.s. would make! Actually, it is the grand total of the capacities of all the machines in this year's TT races. (Above) The engine of the Senior Guzzi. Those two cylinders, with their unconventional layout, mean real speed; that we already know. Note the long curved induction pipe to the front one. (Below) A Senior engine which is new to the Island; nevertheless, the Vincent-HRD camp have every reason to feel confident in their own production. It has speed in plenty and the spring frame has proved its worth in previous TTs. The rocker gear is of unusual design.



(Top) A supercharged two-stroke from the Continent, the Lightweight DKW. The machine bristles with interesting features, not the least of them being that a kick-starter is fitted! A point of difference from the Senior model is that the supercharger is carried in front of the engine, whereas on the larger motors it is underneath. The power unit below the DKW needs no introduction to anyone. Nortons and TT seem to go together. That the engine is the epitome of neatness and high-speed reliability cannot be gainsaid and this Senior model will take some catching on Friday.



Above you see a Junior entry from Germany, the 350c.c. NSU. The beautiful finish on the crankcase casting can clearly be seen. Note the shield over the magneto to prevent petrol dripping into the 'sparks' department, also the lightened engine plates and the method of securing the front of the petrol tank to the down tube. Below is the New Imperial hope for the Senior. Two two-fifties made into one 500 is the plot. Oiling ? Oh, yes! Here we have no fewer than six pumps attending to that business. Both the exhaust ports face forward on this twin. A fast motor if ever there was one.



From Czechoslovakia we got the Jawa entry and one of the Junior engines is shown in the top picture. Unlike the Senior units, which are upright, the Junior ones are carried sloping forward in the frame. See how the exhaust pipe passes through the two front members of the pressed steel frame. The 500 Cross engine immediately above is one of the most interesting machines in the race. It is a rotary valve job carried on a Rudge crankcase and in a frame from the same stable. Cooling fins of very adequate proportions are provided.



INTERNATIONAL ISLAND CLASSIC

Jan 23-25, 2015, Phillip Island, Australia



1 Conor Cummins was the latest high-profile rider recruited to a strong UK team.

Photography: Russell Colvin (Australia), Euan Cameron (NZ)

Words: Hamish Cooper

Roger Winfield cradled a beer as he contemplated a stunning victory on one of the world's most famous race tracks.

"This really is the Ashes of international motorcycling," the UK team manager said, summing up the UK team's effort to break Australia's 10-year winning run in the International Challenge.

"It is a great day for the UK team, and understandably there's a fair bit of emotion in the pits at the moment," said Jeremy McWilliams, who has been at Winfield's side during all the previous campaigns at the Island Classic, held at Phillip Island's Grand Prix circuit.

Northern Ireland's Ryan Farquhar finished as the highest individual point-scorer after the four six-lap races. His stirring efforts ensured the UK team finally knocked over Australia in the Tahbilk International Challenge with a 42-point victory (617 to 575), followed by the US on 445 and the Graeme Crosby-captained New Zealand team on 347.

That it happened on the Australia Day weekend only made the victory taste sweeter for the plucky Poms.

"It was a team effort," said Winfield, "but it certainly wasn't easy. I'm probably the only one who thought we could pull it off. The format of these races means it's won in the workshop. I don't overtire my engines and try to go for reliability."

Despite Aussie riders winning three of the four races, consistency won it for the UK, with not only Farquhar but Conor Cummins and Jeremy McWilliams standing tall.

McWilliams, who has topped the individual points standings three times without taking home the team trophy, was modest in victory.

"The International Challenge is extremely tough and you've got to be there in every race," he said. "This weekend, we had solid riders and solid equipment and we proved to be more reliable when it counted."

"We still had our fair share of issues, but to get past those headaches and take the victory is an absolutely sensational result."

Congratulations must also go to Ryan (Farquhar), who was incredible all weekend."

Farquhar's victory in the Ken Wootton Perpetual Trophy (individual top scorer) was as stunning as the UK team's win. Australian Brendan Roberts (Suzuki Katana) was poised to claim the honours before he ran off at Doohan Corner (Turn One) on the final lap of race four and failed to finish. That opened the door for Farquhar, but the Harris Yamaha F1 rider first had to beat his teammate and International Challenge rookie Cummins (Harris Honda F1).

Cummins was fifth heading into the final lap of race four, and Farquhar was eighth, but the tables were turned during the last 4.445km with Farquhar finishing fifth and Cummins seventh.

That saw Farquhar tally up 141 points after consistent 8-4-6-5 finishes, with Cummins producing a 139-point haul with his 7-6-5-7 scorecard. McWilliams (Harris Yamaha F1, 2-1-17-6) was third overall on 138 points. He had stalled his newly built bike on the grid in race three and had to charge through the pack from last position.

"This is all a bit of a shock really," said Farquhar. "Race four was really all about playing the team game, but in the latter stages I knew what the equation was and I just really put my head down."

"The victory hasn't really sunk in yet, but if you ask me about midnight tonight I'm sure I will have come to grips with it all by then."

Roberts' DNF in race four was the culmination of mass attrition for Australia's core of star riders. At various times fellow Suzuki Katana riders Steve Martin, Shawn Giles, Jed Metcher, Paul Young and Cameron Donald failed to either start or finish one race – three in the case of Martin who had a wretched weekend. To add to their woes Rob

Phillis withdrew from the event after mechanical issues knocked out his Suzuki XR69 in practice.

Team New Zealand's Damien Kavney (XR69, 10-10-10-12) finished fourth overall in the Ken Wootton Perpetual Trophy on 122 points, from Giles (1-DNS-1-2, 119), Metcher (4-2-DNF-1, 116), Young (DNF-3-3-3, 114), Laurie Fyffe (Harris Suzuki, 11-11-12-16, 114), Cameron Donald (3-DNF-4-4, 112) and Roberts (6-5-2-DNF, 110).

Dave Crussell (Yamaha TZ750) was Team America's highest placed individual finisher in 11th position on 105 points.

Meanwhile, there were joint winners in the Phil Irving Perpetual Trophy, awarded to the rider who accumulates the highest amount of points outside the International Challenge. UK-based racer Levi Day won it for the third time in five years, sharing the spoils with Michael Dibb. Day swept the 350cc Classic and 500cc Classic classes, while Dibb matched this in Unlimited Forgotten Era and New Era Formula 1300cc.



2 Michael Dibb and Levi Day tied for points in the Phil Irving Perpetual Trophy. Both were on Hondas separated by two decades.

3 Old and new ... Island Challenge veteran Jeremy McWilliams (99) and Challenge debutant Aussie Jed Metcher (91) duel over Lukey Heights.

4 Tough luck ... Shawn Giles won race one on this beautiful Suzuki Katana then DNF'd in race two.

5 Going for it ... TT hero Cam Donald buries the underbelly of his F1 Suzuki in the Tarmac trying to catch Jed Metcher at Phillip Island's infamous Honda Corner.

6 Beer O'clock ... an emotional Roger Winfield and Jeremy McWilliams celebrate an epic win on Sunday afternoon.

7 Ryan Farquhar dug deep on the last lap of the weekend to win the individual points trophy.

INTERNATIONAL CHALLENGE FINAL POINTS

1	UK	617
2	Australia	575
3	US	445
4	New Zealand	347

INTERNATIONAL CHALLENGE INDIVIDUAL RESULTS

1	Ryan Farquhar, UK,	141
2	Conor Cummins, UK,	139
3	Jeremy McWilliams, UK,	138
4	Damien Kavney, New Zealand,	122
5	Shawn Giles, Australia,	119
6	Jed Metcher, Australia,	116
=7	Paul Young, Australia,	114
=7	Laurie Fyffe, Australia,	114
9	Cameron Donald, Australia,	112
10	Brendan Roberts, Australia,	110



R U A P U N A R A C E W A Y

Feb 21-22, 2015, Christchurch, New Zealand



Emotions ran high as a record crowd honoured the memory of Kiwi motorcycle designer John Britten.

Andrew Stroud's spectacular burnout, where he scribbled the letter B into the Tarmac, summed up the weekend.

Watching were many of the original BEARS racers of the 1980s who had encouraged local dreamer John Britten to turn his thoughts into reality. Sadly John departed early, aged 45 in 1995 and just months after Andrew Stroud and team-mate Stephen Briggs delivered a one-two result in the inaugural FIM World BEARS championship.

His design genius lives on through the owners of those two championship-winning Britten V1000s demonstrated at Ruapuna by Stroud and Briggs.

The two Brittens are owned by Kiwi Kevin Grant and American Bob Robbins. Both plan to continue demonstrating the two most famous V1000s at any opportunity.

"I want the history to be living, not static," said Robbins, who has already arranged for original suppliers to cast up new pistons and machine crankshafts.

Sharing the two title-winning Brittens were Shaun Harris and Loren Poole. Harris debuted the

V1000 at the Isle of Man in 1993 and rode again in 1996 but is often overlooked in celebrations of this famous motorcycle.

'The Gremlin', as the nuggety streetfighter is nicknamed, plans to return to the TT this June. Poole won many races on the V1000 and is remembered for some gutsy rides at the Paeroa Battle of the Streets. He also set world acceleration records on a V1000 on a public road outside Christchurch.

The John Britten Tribute Race was won by current NZ Superbike champion Dennis Charlett. This one-off race saw the victor keep the trophy. "I

first met John when I was racing a 125 GP bike in the early 1990s," Charlett said after his victory on a 1098 Ducati partly sponsored by BEARS president Murray Sutherland. "He was an inspiration. This is the first time I've competed at a BEARS event and I hope they don't think I just jumped in here to snatch a trophy. I plan to return to BEARS events in one of the smaller classes with a Rickman-based racer." Among Charlett's crew was Rob Selby, a key workshop worker in the Britten factory.

Many of the old crew were at the meeting but keeping a low profile. One was Gary Goodfellow, who rode down from his North Island home on a Harley-Davidson. He was a linchpin of the early days of the Britten dream. Based in Canada he rode the Precursor version of the Britten for three years. "That bike got pretty well developed," he recalled. "I had it in Canada for more than a year and I reckon it would have been much easier to put into production, like Bimota was doing, than the later V1000."

Another was team mechanic, Tim Stewart. "At one stage I worked 18 hour days for 18 months non-stop," he recalled. "It took me a year to write up the workshop manual. I sure was living the dream, but then all of us were." It was a gypsy

lifestyle for Tim, who was sent around the world to maintain the limited run of V1000s as they were delivered to owners.

The Britten Tribute swelled the ranks of BEARS racers by 30% and nearly doubled the gate of spectators on Friday and Saturday. Even a rainy Sunday morning only slightly dampened crowd attendance. The event programme sold out at 11am on Saturday and the event T-shirts early on Sunday.

The Britten family's tribute to John was a marquee displaying many unseen projects undertaken by the factory, including the single-cylinder engine designed in 1994. The complete line-up of Brittens were on show, from Aero De Zero right through to four V1000s.

Young national-level racer Hayden Fitzgerald demonstrated the famous Ducati-powered Aero De Zero, built by Mike Brosnan. It hadn't run since the late 1980s. "That was a real honour," an obviously emotional Hayden said later.

The Britten family was in attendance all weekend, running a large merchandising section. "We are truly appreciative of the support BEARS racers gave John," his widow Kirsteen told a large group of fans at the end of the meeting. "You walked with John on his journey."



1 Andrew Stroud wheelied the length of the main straight, despite the V1000 having the revs set to 8500rpm.

2 When he wasn't keeping the Brittens running, mechanic Johan Heyneke was racing his beautiful little Ducati 250.

3 Kiwi Superbike rider, Hayden Fitzgerald, demoed the Aero D Zero, built by Mike Brosnan with input from John Britten.

4 Johan Heyneke warms up Aero D Zero. It had been sitting unused since the late 1980s

5 Joe Hannah demonstrates his Triumph Tiger 100. John Britten, Joe and Allan Wylie built and raced three of these rigid-framed twins in early BEARS events.

6 Dennis Charlett (No 7) powers his Ducati off the startline to win the John Britten Tribute race. Britten factory technician, Rob Selby, was part of his support team.

7 The Britten tent displayed the complete line-up of Brittens. In the foreground is the late-1980s Precursor, with part of the fairing removed to show the engine.



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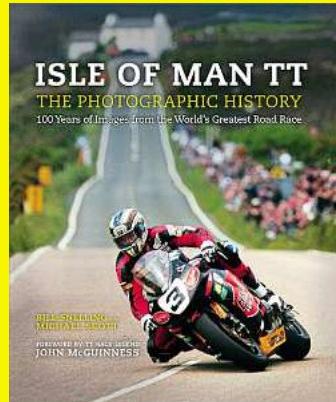
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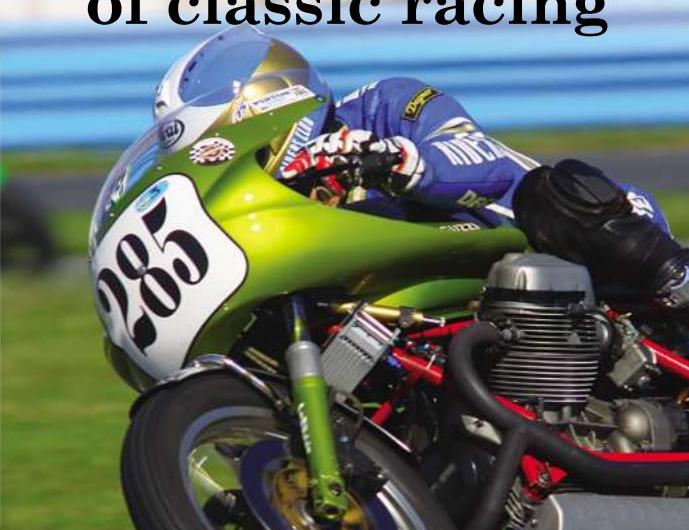
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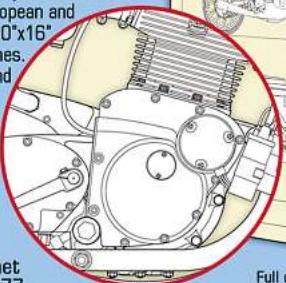
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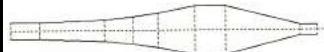
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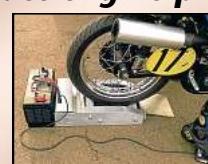
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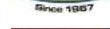
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'Probably the best classic racing in the world'



Photograph—Rusty Lee @ Sportpics



Close racing, full grids and friendly race paddocks at the best racing circuits throughout the UK.

CRMC race weekends offer riders, officials and spectators a memorable taste of racing from a golden bygone era

Featuring all levels of competition from club racing to European championships

For further information go to our website www.crmc.co.uk

IN ASSOCIATION WITH



2015 RACE DATES

PEMBREY - APRIL 4/5

Featuring: ACU Championship Rounds

CADWELL PARK - MAY 2-4

Featuring: ACU Championship Round & Colin Breeze Trophy Race

ANGLESEY - JUNE 5-7

Featuring: ACU Championship Rounds

BRANDS HATCH - JULY 4/5

Featuring: ACU Championship Round & Classic King of Brands Trophy Race

DONINGTON PARK (FIM EUROPE VINTAGE CUP) - AUGUST 7-9

Featuring: ACU Championship Rounds & Wheatcroft Trophy Race

LYDDEN HILL - SEPTEMBER 5/6

Featuring: Charlie Sanby Trophy Race

SNETTERTON - OCTOBER 2-4

ACU Championship Rounds & Classic Race of Aces Trophy Race